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THE WORSHIP OF GOD.

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The Worship of God and Fellowship among Men.

A SERIES OF

SERMONS ON PUBLIC WORSHIP.

PREACHED AT CHRIST CHURCH, ST. MARYLEBONE.

[Frederick Denison Maurice and others.]

CAMBRIDGE:
MACMILLAN AND CO.
1858.

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PREFACE.

THESE Sermons were not addressed specially to any class. They were, however, suggested by the recent effort to bring the members of the Working Class to our Churches. That effort will surely be attended with infinite blessings, if it leads us to think of the wants which are common to us all. It may produce mischief, if it nourishes the thought that our poorer brethren are in greater danger than we are of becoming heathens and godless, or that there is more than one way of delivering the rich, the poor, the whole land from that danger. A Gospel of God, a Gospel that He is caring for us all, seeking after us all, drawing us to Himself, offering us Communion with Him as the

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great reward, holding out separation from Him as the infinite loss,—this has been in former days, this must be in ours, the foundation of all practical teaching, of all deliverance for the conscience of individuals, for the societies of men. To use arts of terror or persuasion for the purpose of inducing men of one class or another to care for their souls, would be natural and reasonable if we were not entrusted with a message from God, that He cares more for their souls and bodies than they or we care for them. If that message is committed to us, surely our business is to deliver it; to set forth the signs and tokens which God has given that it is a true message and that He will make it effectual; to expect more from His revelation of Himself than from any brilliancy of speech or wisdom that the most skilful or powerful preacher has attained.

Those who preached these Sermons were desirous to set forth this old truth in the simplest language they could find. They trust that their words may reach some who have

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been excluded by their own fault or by any thing else from the ordinances of the Church of Christ. They trust that the same words may remind those who habitually partake of these ordinances, that God is the author of them, that God is the end of them; that they proclaim Him as their Father and the Father of all the families of the earth, as their Reconciler and as the Reconciler of the whole world.

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PREACHING,

A CALL TO WORSHIP.

BY

FREDERICK DENISON MAURICE, M.A.

CHAPLAIN OF LINCOLN'S INN.

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PREACHING,

A CALL TO WORSHIP.

1 Corinthians i. 21—24.

For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign and the Greeks seek after wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block and to the Greeks, foolishness; but unto them which are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

These words were written by St. Paul, the greatest preacher the world has ever seen. He was a Jew. But people who were not Jews, people who hated the Jews, heard him and believed what he said. He was born more than eighteen hundred years ago in a town of Asia. Yet people living at this day, Englishmen, Frenchmen, Italians, Germans, Americans, remember him and listen to him. You have been

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hearing a chapter taken from a Letter of his to-night. Tomorrow (Jan. 25) is kept here and in many different lands as the festival of his Conversion. We give thanks that he was turned from being the enemy of Christ's gospel, to be the preacher of the gospel. That was the business of his life. He was an artisan, he made tents, but it was that he might support himself while he was preaching. God, he said, had ordained him to be a preacher; if he did not preach, woe was to him. And yet here he seems to speak of preaching with contempt. He calls it foolishness. How is that? What can he mean?

He takes pains that we should understand what he meant. He came to bear witness to men concerning God. How was he to do this? Was he to reason and argue about God? Was he to bring proofs that He had made the world or made men? He did not think it was necessary to do that. There were better proofs than his fine words. Men had signs of His wisdom all about them. Day and night, seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, were telling them of Him. Rains and fruitful seasons filling their hearts with food and gladness spoke of Him. Their bodies spoke of

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Him. David was astonished when he remembered how curiously and wonderfully he was made, how each limb had been wrought to fulfil its purpose. And so too men's thoughts spoke even more clearly of Him. How they remembered events that had happened long ago! How they looked forward to what should happen after they were in their graves!

The Greeks, who were a clever and wise people, had been observant of these things. They were sure their wisdom must have come from some wise God. As St. Paul told them, and they knew that he said what was true, they had been seeking after this God if haply they might feel after Him and find Him. They had guessed rightly that they must be His offspring. Everything they saw seemed to give them some hints about Him. He must be in the sun they said, for does not He give us light? He must be in rivers and fountains, for He sends us refreshment. He must be like us, for how much is a man more beautiful and glorious than all the things he has to do with. They felt after God, they tried to think what form He must have. They tried to make images of Him. But they would have

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owned just what St. Paul says: We do not know Him. We have a great many fancies about Him; but with all our wisdom we have not found out what He is. Sometimes we think He is very kind to us, oftener we suspect He is envious of us. We cannot tell why there should be so much sadness among men, unless some One who rules over them has a spite against them. Perhaps He may not have a spite against us all. He may like some men and some cities, and dislike others. Or there may be different Gods, and one may like, another may dislike this man and this city. But on the whole there seems more sorrow than joy on this earth. There are far more that are miserable than that are happy. And that ugly tyrant Death comes to all, to the happy in the very midst of their happiness. What does he come for, they asked? Is it to put an end to us altogether, or to take us away from all that we like here into some worse place? We cannot tell. We must try to persuade Him that rules us, or Him that rules under Him, not to be very cruel to us. But as for knowing Him, to being able to say certainly how He feels towards us, that is impossible.

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The Jewish tentmaker told these learned Greeks that it was not impossible. He came into the midst of cities that were full of beautiful temples where men were worshipping all kinds of Gods. He came into the midst of people who were disputing about these Gods, and about themselves, and about all things in heaven and in earth. And he said, "I can tell you who He is, whom you want to know, and do not know. I can declare to you what manner of God that is who is so near you and whom you are seeking afar off. I can tell you who it is from whom you came, whose offspring you are and whom you are trying to make again in your likeness, who has given you life and strength and all things, and to whom you are bringing your offerings as if He needed them."

Fancy such words as these coming from a man of a race which they despised. It was as if a New Zealander should stand up and tell us in London that he could teach us about the most wonderful things which we have not been able with all our Schools and Universities to find out. And it is not enough to say that. The New Zealander might be reckoned a great man

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in his own tribe. But the Jews themselves despised and hated Paul. They said he had forsaken the God of Abraham. They said that he declared a crucified man to be the Son of God. They for their parts worshipped the mighty King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who ruled in the armies of heaven, and who would some day send His Messenger upon earth to destroy their enemies and to exalt them. But this Saul, they said, was worshipping a God of weakness not of power, one who had come without any signs of greatness at all and who had been put to death as a rebel.

St. Paul did not deny the charge that he proclaimed this crucified man to be the wisdom and power of God. He said openly that this was his faith. He had come for the purpose of telling the Greeks, "You have been seeking to know what this wise God is, and how He is disposed to you. There at Christ's cross you may find what you are seeking." He had come for the purpose of saying to the Jews, "You are crying out that the mighty God, the God whom nothing on earth or in heaven can resist, the God of your fathers, would reveal His power." Here at this cross He did reveal it. St. Paul

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was aware how such language would sound. The Greeks would call it foolishness; the Jews would call it blasphemy. Nevertheless he affirmed that so it was. He had little else to do. No arguments of his would have convinced any one that what seemed so monstrous was true. If he had used the most eloquent and persuasive words, they must have been utterly in vain. He trusted to something else than arguments and persuasive words, when he came declaring the testimony of God.

To what did he trust? He trusted God Himself. He was sure that He had awakened men to enquire after Him. He was sure that it was His purpose that they should know Him. He was sure that the devil would try hard to persuade men that God is not that Being whom Jesus revealed, that He is a Being of another kind altogether; not loving but malicious, not true but insincere, not desirous to find His creatures when they had lost themselves, but quite willing that they should perish. He was sure therefore that he should encounter tremendous opposition, that his words would be not only scorned but hated; that the more they were a message of peace and goodwill to

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men the more they would be hated. He had proofs enough of this in their treatment of him; every day the proofs became more decisive. But he was confident that God was stronger than the devil; that good is to overcome evil. As he expressed it in his bold way, the weakness of God is stronger than man, the foolishness of God is wiser than man. Therefore he expected that the foolishness of preaching—the simple announcement of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, would make itself felt sooner or later in Judea or Greece, and to the farthest corners of the earth.

There was much in his own day to show him that his expectation was not a vain one. Already it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believed. I have explained to you from what they were saved. They had been ignorant of God. They had confounded Him with the things that He made and also themselves. They had deemed Him cruel like themselves, or false like themselves, or at best indifferent about His creatures like themselves. And this ignorance of God made the world and their fellow-creatures dark to them. They feared where no fear was. There

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might be some ill-natured crafty god in every hill or valley who was plotting to do them mischief. They could not fairly examine the things they saw, for they might be gods who would spring out upon them. As different countries and different cities were thought to be under different Gods who cared for one and detested another, as these countries and cities had different interests, there could be no common heart and fellowship between them. Every country and city, almost each man, might be the enemy of every other.

The foolishness of preaching drew away the thick veil which had hidden the face of God. He whom they had thought was a foe spoke to them as a Father. He whom they believed they had put at a distance from them by their evil deeds, declared that He Himself was putting away their evil deeds and was making Himself known unto them in His Son. He who had seemed to be using death as His last and most cruel minister, showed that He was overcoming death for them. He who they supposed could only appoint them to death thus drew nigh to them in a Son who bore their infirmities, carried their poverty and sickness, died their

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death. Those who hated each other because they hated God and thought that He hated them, found that He was loving them all, was uniting them all to Himself, was declaring them all members of one body in His Son, was promising them One Spirit that they might dwell together in this world and in the ages to come. Was not this salvation? And it was the effect of believing those things to be true which St. Paul in his preaching affirmed to be true.

He could not, as I said before, prove his words to be true. If you are in a fog and the sun breaks out upon your path, the cleverest man in the world cannot prove that it is the sun. But the sun proves it, the buildings about you prove it, the faces that you look upon prove it. The Jews and Greeks who believed St. Paul had testimonies of the same kind that they were not believing a lie. They had been in a fog, everything in heaven and earth had been dark to them. As the light shone upon their hearts, all the universe became lighted up. They were still in the old places; they had the old persons near them; yet all had become new. The works they were

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doing, birth, sorrow, death, all became changed when they confessed Christ who was born of the Virgin, Christ who had been the heir of sorrow, Christ who had died. They found that not sorrow or death, but separation from the righteous and true God was the misery of His creatures. They found that Christ had made them one with Him, and that sorrow, death, and the sense of their own sins all drew them to Him as their everlasting refuge and home.

I have said, dear brethren, that St. Paul had evidence in his own day that it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. But he expected that this evidence would be much stronger after he left the world than while he was in it. He believed that he was only gathering in the first-fruits of a harvest which others would reap. He believed that he was just beginning to convert the nations, and that by degrees lands which he had never visited, which he had scarcely dreamed of, would know what it was to be saved out of thick darkness and to see a marvellous light. I do not suppose St. Paul ever came near our island, but many preachers whose names we do not know, some whose names we do know, brought the

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tidings to the ears of our fathers, which he brought to the cities of Greece and of Asia. Here they had the same battle to fight as elsewhere. But they prevailed. Our ancestors verily believed that Jesus Christ the crucified shewed forth to them the wisdom of God; that in Him they could know God and trust God and worship God. That faith, when it had once been received into our land, changed the face of it. Men came and were baptised into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. They confessed that the highest of all was the Father of all; that He had made peace with them in His Son; that they were members of one family in Him the Elder Brother of the family; that they could do the work they had to do as priests, lawyers, statesmen, doctors, shopkeepers and labourers, by the guidance and teaching of a Spirit who governed the hearts, the minds, the speech of mortals. Kings owned that they reigned in Christ's Name for the good of those whom Christ died to save. Schools were set up because their God and Father wished His children to know Him and to know themselves, and to know what a wonderful earth He had given them. Churches rose

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up as witnesses that men have a right to draw near to God as His children, that they may in all times of their tribulation, and in all times of their wealth, seek Him who is not far from any one of them; that He is always looking for them however far they have wandered from Him; that the marriage bond is divine and is blessed by Him, whether princes or peasants enter into it; that He hallows rites of burial and has taken the victory away from the grave, that all may eat and drink at His table, because He who descended to the lowest parts of the earth has ascended to Heaven that He might fill all things and be our mediator and advocate at His Father's right hand; that there is a work for all, and an eternal Sabbath for all with Him in whose presence is the fulness of rest and joy.

Of these things Churches testified to our fathers, of these they still testify to us. The preacher is the interpreter of their meaning. Churches were not built for him, they were built for the Worship of God. But as men are inclined to worship false Gods, as they are often afraid to draw nigh to the true God, as they forget what God has done, that

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they may be able to have fellowship with Him and with each other, as these are not the evils and dangers of one particular time and place, but of all times and of all places, there is need for the preacher to speak the same words which were spoken in the days that are gone. His work is a very great and terrible one, he ought to devote to it all the powers and knowledge that God has given him. And yet he should think as St. Paul thought, who brought so much greater powers and so much wider knowledge to His service, that the best preaching is only a simple testimony of what God is; that by itself it is mere foolishness; that it becomes mighty because God takes it as His instrument to save men from ignorance and hatred of Him. Holding it to be God's work not His, the preacher casts down his weak silly sentences without fear, yea with undoubting confidence, believing that if he speaks truly, the truth will make itself manifest hereafter, if not now; that if he speaks lies, the lies will be scattered as all lies must be and shall be at last. He cannot give the least heed to those who tell him that what he is speaking is too deep, too hard for poor folks to take in who have had no schooling. He knows in his

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inmost soul that it is too deep, too hard for him till he is brought to feel himself on the level of the most foolish. He knows it is too hard for him, till his conceit is brought down, till he confesses himself a sinner like all other sinners before God. He knows that God is educating other people as He has educated him, by making them know that they are nothing in themselves and so by obliging them to seek for everything in Him.

And therefore it is, brethren, that our preaching, if it is not a wicked mockery when it goes out of our lips, if it is not merely like sounding brass and tinkling cymbal in your ears, must lead you to worship. We may please you or we may frighten you, by excellency of speech or words of man's wisdom. But if we declare to you a gospel, it must be a gospel of God and concerning God, it must seek to destroy the barriers which are between you and God. We must announce the glad tidings that God calls men to cast down every burden, the burden of their sorrows, the burden of their sins, the burden of their own selves, the burden of their families and their country, of the Church and of the whole world, before Him whose Son

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has borne all burthens. We must proclaim the glad tidings to those who feel repentance the most difficult of all duties, that God is the giver of repentance, that He turns round the heart to Him, that He will do this for us each day and each hour. We must proclaim the glad tidings, that by believing in Christ, the Righteous and Holy and Loving, those who are unrighteous and unholy and unloving may clothe themselves with His nature, may become like Him. We must proclaim the glad tidings to those who complain that their own little frets and quarrels and jealousies are more important to them than the sorrows of their brethren, than all which affects their country and mankind, that God who cares for all, desires to make us care for all; that He, if we yield ourselves to His Spirit, will cure us of our frivolities and hard-heartedness, and of whatever else our consciences tell us is base and evil in His sight. We are to proclaim the good news to the harlot and to the sot, that God will deliver them out of the lusts and the temptations that are destroying them, and will give them His Own pure and holy Nature.

Thus you see that to whatever direction

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our words turn, to whomsoever they are addressed, they are a call to worship. I do not mean that they are a call to worship here in this Church more than in the family, than in the daily walk, than in the shop, than at the loom. They are a call to seek the Father of our Spirits, Him in whom we live and move and have our being, every-where, to look upon every place as the witness of His presence, upon every adversity as asserting a need for His help, upon every perplexity as a motive for seeking His counsel, upon every sin as forcing us to fly for deliverance to His righteousness. The blessing of worshipping in Churches is that it is a common worship; that all say "We have erred and strayed" together, that all say "Our Father" together. The blessing of praying in Churches is that it convicts us of our narrow partial feelings, of our wandering attention, of our poor and selfish desires; that it rebukes us for them; that it points to God's Truth and Love as the inheritance and exceeding great reward which we should seek after together, which we should hold out to our neighbours as theirs, that we may strive for it more earnestly ourselves. But when we have learnt

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that this is the prize of our high calling, when we have thoroughly believed that God is over all, nigh unto all that call upon Him, we need not fear if He should exclude us from Churches, or fix us on sick beds, or send us to distant lands where His ordinances are withheld. These will be methods of His discipline to make us know Him better and worship Him better, to make us dissatisfied with even His most precious gifts, seeing we are intended to find our rest, not in them, but in Him.

For everything that is done in these Temples made with hands is but a sign and preparation for something higher that is to be.

We listen to preaching that the Voice of Christ the Divine Word may penetrate, not into our ears, but into our hearts. We remember the Conversion of St. Paul and his life on earth, that we may be prepared for fellowship with him and with the spirits of just men made perfect, who fed upon his words and proclaimed his gospel upon earth. Earthly weddings are pledges of that perfect union which shall be for husbands and wives, and for all who are bidden to the Supper of the Lamb. The worship here is the preparation for that Worship which shall

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be when the Great Voice out of Heaven shall cry and the whole earth shall answer to it, "Behold the Tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them and be their God."

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COMMON PRAYER,

THE METHOD OF WORSHIP.

BY

THOMAS JAMES ROWSELL, M.A.,

INCUMBENT OF ST. PETER'S, STEPNEY, AND DOMESTIC CHAPLAIN TO HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF SUTHERLAND.

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COMMON PRAYER,

THE METHOD OF WORSHIP.

S. Matthew xxi. 13.

It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer.

Jesus came into Jerusalem, and the city was much moved; multitudes went before and multitudes followed, and they sang praises and gave vent to their inward excitement by singing aloud "Hosanna to the Son of David." They seemed to feel the presence of their *King*, and that He naturally drew forth their homage; and when He spake they could not choose but hear, for He was One who had authority, and that, not because He was a King and Lord such as Herod was, but because what He said and what He did so appealed to their spirits, so claimed their homage, so touched their hearts, that they spoke

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as the Spirit gave them utterance. And Jesus passed from the streets into the Temple; He ofttimes resorted hither, and indeed He "taught daily in the Temple;" but at this time, when more and more He was revealing Himself as the Judge of men, and therefore as their Saviour, He came into the Holy Temple of God, and put an outward visible mark of His judgment on all that was going on there. He revealed to the people and to us, Who it is That separates the good from the bad in His own sight, Who it is That gives us sight to see what is good and what is bad in our own spirits; for Jesus came into the courts of the Great Temple, and His calm angry Eye fell on those who were there and all that they were doing. You may notice how He *separates*, as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats; He cast out all those that bought and sold in the Temple, but the blind and the lame came to Him and He healed them. You are at once alive to a meaning in this, you feel that there is a Spirit ruling Him, a motive and a will in this action. This buying and selling in the House of Prayer, in the House of His Father, only too sadly expressed what was going on in the Living Temples

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of men's hearts—what was the principle and the inward life of Jerusalem: buying and selling, mere money-making, heaping up riches, selfishness and covetousness, were revealing themselves as the mainspring of daily life; Mammon was more and more the God, and misery and hatred and unbrotherly division the issues of such worship. It was not, you can easily understand, that the buying and selling and changing of money were in themselves evil; no ban or mark is laid by Christ's Divine Hand on the commerce of the world; no change is made by Him in the blessedness of daily labour and bread-earning: but when that which God ordained to be a *means*, is sought by us as an *end*, when God's gifts are worshipped and our Divine Giver forgotten or forsaken, when the happy and earnest labour of life which was ordained to

"Lead us daily nearer God"

is made the very worship of a man's spirit, so that wages and money are the very lords of his spirit; then be sure, that as we approach more and more consciously to the Divine Presence of our Deliverer, His Eye of Judgment falls on our evil and on our good, and His Word speeds

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into our spirits, "Take these things hence." He came as a Son and claimed the Temple for God's use; He said, "It is written," "My House"—and He leaves these words to vindicate and explain themselves to those who heard, and to us who read them. There is a spirit and a living voice in these words, and always had been. They had always been true ever since Isaiah gave them utterance, for he spake as he was moved by the Holy Ghost: the Temple was His Father's house; for three years He had been teaching, by most gracious acts of Love, by all His most human sympathies, and by all His Divine Light, that God was the Heavenly Father of all men. To the Jews their Temple had been for years as an outward sign and token of this fact. When it stood out in its ancient glory, it was that spot whither the Tribes went up as one band of Brothers and Sisters—to share as a single Family all the good and honourable gifts prepared for them by their Father in Heaven. The Temple was the Home of Homes—the inner shrine of the Family; and as the High Priest stood forth with all the symbols of the twelve tribes upon him and

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lifted up his hands and spread them forth towards the silent multitude, and the sweet incense rose up like an embodied Prayer towards Heaven—then the people knew that all this glorious service spake to their spirits of a Heavenly Father Who was always scattering His gifts—always drawing up their hearts to Himself—always uniting them to each other by thus drawing all to one Father and Home;—and when the people forgat God their Saviour, then they fell out by the way—they bought and sold each other to any passing Ishmaelite—for they divided heart from heart and family from family—they set up leaders of parties, and threw their energies into sectarianism—Pharisee hated Sadducee, and one Jew scorned another; and so the Temple became only a "form of Godliness without the power." They still prided themselves much on its noble and striking grandeur—they were ready to die for *it*, though they would not live or die for *GOD*. They did not forsake *it*—but it still was the chosen spot where they vented the inward and most stirring feelings of their hearts. But buying and selling expressed what *those feelings were*—and once as Jesus sat by

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the brow of Mount Olivet, and saw the Temple stand out in all its touching glory in the rays of the setting sun, "He wept" over it. That over which the Jews rejoiced made the Son of God weep—man rejoicing and God weeping. For while the multitudes thronged the Temple and forsook Him who made that Temple holy, they made their Brother weep for their misery,—a misery which He saw was cursing them, and must end in a yet deeper and darker woe than was yet upon them. They fondled the Temple, they displayed it, they were proud of it, they took the stranger to see it; but it was only as the poor and mindless mother will fondle the corpse of her beautiful boy when the spirit has departed,

> The form where Beauty lingers,

when to all eyes but her own the dishonour of death is upon him.

My Christian Brethren, times change, and many human circumstances change, and the manners of men, and their customs, and their dress, and their warfare, and the arts of peace, the landmarks of science and the boundaries of countries—all change. But the human heart is the same, and the Word of God abideth for ever.

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God is our Father in all the true sense in which the Eternal Son revealed Him, and at this hour Jesus is the Word who was in the beginning, "the *same* yesterday, to-day, and for ever," and He is the Light of men; His eye is on our Temple, on our Church of England, and these Temples of His grace, the Churches in our land, are our places for going up to worship with all our heart and soul and strength our Heavenly Father; and our spirits are led by our Father in Heaven through the Spirit of His Son Jesus. Any Church, and to you therefore *this Church*, is a "House of Prayer," and every Prayer-book in it tells you that it is a place for *Common* Prayer. The Church is the Home of a Parish. It gathers into one the various scattered families that lie, as it were, beneath its shadow; and you may have seen some of our noble Cathedrals, our Mother Churches, standing on a hill, and beneath their old time-worn and venerable towers and pinnacles and buttresses, lie sleeping protected and cherished, the homes of the families who are nursed by the one Mother. The Lord Jesus Christ revealed to us in His own life, and witnessed in all His gifts, that men are really and truly one Great Family in God: and that this

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might not be a vague and too large a truth for our hearts and souls to take in, this truth is held before us in miniature in each Parish. We have indeed our many and various stations and places of work where we buy and sell; our call to work in our Father's vineyard, our influence through mind and heart, all in their providential methods contributing to a common stock, "many members, but one Body in Christ." As a nation we feel this brotherhood, this commonalty, keenly and earnestly. No sooner does the sound of a foreign footstep approach the ocean which surrounds us, no sooner does the sign of an invader catch the eye of our watchmen on the heights, than the whole land of Englishmen as one family are linked hand in hand and heart in heart. If a Northern Power puts a hand towards the South, the importance of the step is felt, and England's sons go forth from their homes: and lately, when the cry of sorrow and of pain has come to us vibrating on the wires, and every movement of the electric wires was watched with passionate anxiety, England confessed through all cities and towns and witnessed how entirely we are brothers and sisters, and how we can send up our common

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prayer with our dear Indian sufferers and with their afflicted relatives, and how our noblest sympathies have sped more quick than electricity to the brave and heroic defenders of our women and children. Thank God He has insisted on our knowing that we are brothers. We are all made to feel this brotherhood in our families, in the sorrows, the joys, the honour, or the disgrace that occurs. Look at any family in its meetings from time to time, and how the "not forsaking the assembling themselves together" under a father's roof and by his fireside sustains the old nursery love and sunny temper and the gladness of the past. Some special day perhaps summons the busy sons and the motherly daughters to the one old home: it is the father's and mother's wedding-day, or birthday, or it is old glad Christmas with all its sacred associations,—and how common love is sustained, and any chill is thawed by the glow and warmth of Christmas Love-fires. How this, alas! is sadly brought home to us when the aged and honoured parents have fallen asleep—and alas! perhaps some one or two, with their spirit of merchandise, with an inward covetousness never before developed,

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have brought into the temple of the family a grasping spirit that delights in seizing and holding all it can, and whose chief pleasure is to be unequal, and to have as *much more* as possible than the companions of their nursery and the playmates beside their father's knee. Do we not know what this spirit is? how this is not the Spirit of Christ, how it in families must bring on the same end as befel the Temple of Jerusalem? then all that is good and kind and just must depart out of the heart, and that which is the Temple of God's Spirit becomes darkened and gloomy. Oh! my dear brethren, our God and Heavenly Father is through all feelings, through all joys and sorrows, preaching to us to be of "one mind in a house," and to come and express this in the House of Prayer, and these feelings which are common to our race are expressed and sustained in a parish. The Parish is a family, and we may rest assured that our Heavenly Father knows what we have need of, and He brings us into neighbourhoods by means of our work, or through friendship, or some influence which leads us to live here, rather than elsewhere; so that to most of us we cannot *choose* where we

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would live, and a parish is simply a number of families and people who live around a common centre, and the Church is the home of the district or parish; and it has been a strong and righteous feeling among our English people that their Parish Church embodies to them so many sacred, hopeful, serious associations, that they ever long to cherish it with hand and heart, and the very sight of it is fraught with goodly influences, and the sound of its bells will awaken and stir the sweetest and most melancholy and the most gladsome feelings of our hearts for good—

> "But they my troubled Spirit rule,
> For they controlled me when a Boy,
> They bring me sorrow touch'd with joy,
> The merry, merry *Bells* of Yule."

Our Church calls all families together, it bears witness, in all the changes of tide and time, to One Who is unchangeable, and amidst all our divisions or quarrels it still quietly stands forth, and by its name as Our Father's House forbids or rebukes us when we fall out by the way. It gathers into itself under a Father's Roof in the presence of our Divine and Human Brother, the Son of God and

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Man, all the family. Rich and poor meet together, and the Church witnesses to them that their business and occupations, trade and social condition, are really bonds of brotherhood if they will not "forsake the assembling of themselves together." It opens its doors freely to all, and specially on our day of rest it stands forth as a solid and unchanging Sermon, still full of the voice of Jesus, "Come unto me all that labour, I will give you rest. Remember my Father, remember His Rest, and He remembers the man-servant and the maid-servant, and cattle, and stranger." As often as you enter these doors, and *daily* they are open to welcome any as a loving part of the family of the parish, you are entering into the reality of family life, you are putting into simple action your faith in Jesus Christ, and you are following preaching to its only practical end.

"*Praying* is the end of Preaching." For as the preacher proclaims Jesus Christ, and so makes us see and know with all our hearts and souls and thoughts and love, our God and Father, so the Spirit of both Father and Son leads us into closer and more actual communion and brotherhood with each other; and all parochial means

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which issue from a Church, the Priests ordained solemnly and set apart—their duties, their preaching, and they who act with them, the visitors, the teachers—are simply putting into action the inward Spiritual Life, "the Life hid with Christ in God," which is given and quickened by the Spirit of our Father during our Services in Church; at our quiet earnest prayers (*Common* Prayer) we *enjoy* the end of preaching:

> "Resort to Sermons, but to Prayers most,
> Praying is the end of Preaching."

As family prayer in our homes and private prayers in our own chambers confesses each its own needs, its own objects—so Church common prayer is the great harmony of human hearts, and all the manifold voices and varied tones and utterances of human feelings are blended into one strain of harmony; and if some discord be there, if some voices are silent, if some dark hearts like Cain's beat down their own prayers to earth, because of unrepented, unforsaken sins, if some notes of earthly anger and wrath be there, yet be sure that the cloud of prayer which arises from the one family in a Church floats upward to the Throne of Grace like a sweet cloud of

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incense, and the Great High Priest Who is the surety of propitiation, the true mercy-seat, the certain assurance of our Father's acceptance and love, is in the midst where "two or three are gathered together." Just look for a moment how our *Common* Prayer is truly and honestly *common* to the poorest and saddest man and the priest, common to *them* and to the gentle woman and pure hearts of the best of us. Take one or two.

"The Confession." Here we pray and unbosom our hearts before a listening, loving Father—"We have erred and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep, we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, we have done those things which we ought not to have done." How each one's own inward interpretation of these words, each one's consciousness of what *he* means by the words, gives him a living sympathy with others. Perhaps your eye for a moment catches sight of a sad and serious look on another face, and the very sincerity lends an earnestness to your own prayer. Each one does not mean the same sin, for our temptations and our tempers and dispositions are manifold. But each one most truly means that

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he has "followed too much the devices and desires of his *own heart*," and so we feel how the same *heart* is in us, how completely we are brothers and sisters, with like feelings, and in all points tempted as each other. Or look again at the whole of our Litany. How we supplicate for common blessings, for those that we all share together, and the loss of any of which would be a pain to all.

Take any one that occurs; I take the first my eye falls on. "In all time of our tribulation, in all time of our wealth—(*i. e.* well-doing), in the hour of *death*, and in the day of judgment." Here are indeed links of brotherhood which are lightened and illuminated by Common Prayer, and though they always exist, yet Common Prayer makes us confess and feel. Or take our Common Prayer for "all conditions of men," that one which expressly assures us that our Parish Church is the channel through and by which we are in close active communion with all the whole Church of Christ, and with all *sorts and conditions of men:* and particularly this prayer seems to me affecting, because if one of our great family in our parish is sick and unable to come, we do, by means of

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this prayer, bring our sick brother into the midst and lay him at the feet of Jesus Christ, and ask Him to put forth His hand and heal. And in our common Thanksgiving Prayer we so realise this, that as we weep with those who weep, so we rejoice with the recovered who rejoice. The active sympathies of one with another are thus stirred and hallowed by fond and kindly exercise, and an interest, which our merchandise is apt to deaden and our buying and selling make us forget, is awakened, and our Father's House urges us to take all hence except our love to God and man, on which *love* our life depends. It is easy for any of you to follow out this subject for yourselves. Take any prayer and consider how it concerns each member of the family, and how it concerns *you*, and as your own feelings are true and simple you will find yourselves in more kind and careful love towards all else. Indeed any who regularly attend their Church and accustom themselves to seek God's presence in the midst of the family where He has placed them, who do not rove about and seek preachers, and so (as many, alas, I fear do) mistake the excitement which a sermon may produce for the end to

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which all sermons ought to lead any who regularly attend their Church, will bear glad witness that love deepens as we do loving acts, and prayer becomes more and more the expression of our love as we live in the presence of our friends and neighbours, and enjoy together with them the House of our Heavenly Father. Surely in this we confess and do homage to our blessed Saviour, by more and more entering into the sacredness of brotherly love, for man is God's image to us, and Christ's stamp is on each; as people come constantly to Church they are more united to each other, their features become more familiar, and if we hear of any sorrow or joy that has been God-sent to a parishioner our own heart is touched; we meet so often at the House of our Father that a kindly feeling, a feeling that is of *kindred*, is always ready to put itself into action whenever an occasion presents itself:

> "Old friends, old scenes will lovelier be
> As more of Heaven in each we see,
> Some softening gleam of love and prayer
> Shall dawn on every cross and care."

It is to be explained to you in one of this course of Sermons, how the Holy Communion

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of the Body and Blood of Christ is the divine and sacred Gift which imparts and renews the life and love of the Church. Amongst English people there is mostly a sort of constitutional reserve, they do not open out to each other soon, and so are often less neighbourly and friendly than they ought to be; but the coming to Church together, treading the same path, sharing the same Prayers, at once puts into active communion the inward good nature which wanted a medium and an opening. It has been my joy to witness this very specially in the past year, when I have seen acts of goodness, friendship, neighbourly love, unsealed from their pent-up fountains through the fellowship of Common Prayer and Common Worship. It is our "Father's business" with us at His House, to stamp the "image and superscription" of His beloved Son more brightly on our spirits, and to make us realize our Divine and human fellowship, and to enlarge our "bowels of compassion," so that we can feel to be debtors both to the Greek and Barbarian as well as to the Christian, to infuse through our love in our Parish, a love to all mankind. Our Parish Church, (and all God's gifts that flow into our

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spirits through our Communion,) is an earnest of our membership in the great Body of Christ; it is our expression of fellowship with the Holy Catholic Church, our point of contact with all Christendom. The Church visible and invisible is Christ's Father's House, and all the streams and creeks and bays ebb and flow according to the tides of the great ocean. Our Parish Priest, our Holy Communion at our Church, our Common Prayer with our neighbours and family, as these are hallowed and cherished, kindle the Christ-life in us, for the Hand of Jesus is leading you and guiding you into the Spirit of His "Father's business," when you come with simple, penitent, loving hearts, and present yourselves unto your God, and bow before His footstool and worship together before Him in the Beauty of Holiness, and will all say heartily, "We were glad when they said, We will go into the House of the Lord."

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BAPTISM,

AN ADMISSION TO THE PRIVILEGE OF WORSHIP.

BY

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BAPTISM,

AN ADMISSION TO THE PRIVILEGE OF WORSHIP.

St. Matthew xxviii. 19.

Baptising in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

By Baptism we are said to be christened, or made *Christians.* I need not say how deep a meaning there is in this word 'Christian,' nor how reverently we ought to regard it. But I venture to recal to your minds what may have seemed too careless a use of it, because it really proves not how carelessly, but how thoughtfully, our fathers applied it. People have spoken of brute animals as showing occasionally almost as much sense as "a Christian." That is, they have used the term 'Christian' as expressing what is properly *human,* in distinction from

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what is *animal.* For there is a certain condition, with its own habits attached to it, which we perceive to be appointed for the lower animals, and therefore in them can regard without disgust, but which we know to be unworthy of man. The beasts of the field are obviously different from ourselves, in being governed by appetite and unreasoning instinct, and in having no interest except in what is present to them. Some of them lead solitary lives, others are gregarious; but even these have no common inheritance, no power of common growth or improvement, no family, no society.

This merely animal condition has a mysterious hold, as we well know, upon our own race, and is constantly seeking to absorb what is properly *human* into it. Every man knows the strength of his animal nature; every one feels often that he himself is sinking into it, and is able to observe in other men the facility with which they descend to the level of the brutes. Tyrannical desire, thoughtlessness, habits which have become no better than an instinct, separation from his fellows, interest in the present alone,—these *animal* tendencies are perpetually haunting the existence of each of us. The

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savage hunter of the primeval forest will sometimes appear to excel only in cunning, the wild beasts that he pursues. The tamed and domesticated man may seem to be driven as slavishly as the beast of burden, to feed himself fat as stupidly as the stalled ox.

Observe, however, that *men cannot become mere animals.* They must be *worse* than the beasts, if they will not be *better.* Beasts do not grow *devilish,* as men may. There is thus a terrible witness, in the degradation of man, of the glory which his Maker intended for him.

That glory has also a witness, as I have said, in the conscience of each man. We *know* that we are made better than the brutes. There is a higher life, manifestly, of which we are the inheritors. We are associated together, man to man, by mysterious but undeniable bonds. We feel after the Maker of us all, as if we were related to *Him* also, as if we ought not to be in ignorance of Him.

What is the nature then of that higher life for which we were made? What rights may we claim, what hopes may we cherish, where is our strength, under what law do we exist?

Upon questions like these, vital questions

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surely, if any questions are vital, we have, in that ordinance which we are to consider to-night, the most clear and decided testimony. In discussing our Christian Baptism, we are discussing, let us remember, the true birthright of humanity, the interests which bind us all unitedly to God. Those who desire to understand that birthright, and to lay hold on all that belongs to it, should consider well to what privileges their Baptism entitles them.

The act of Baptism is a very simple one certainly, to have high things spoken of it. Apart from its divine sanction, to baptise is simply to wash or wet; to pour water upon, or to dip in water, a person or thing. You may have read something, or conceived some notion, of heathen mysteries. The studied secrecy, the disguised material, the wizard's peeping and muttering, the darkness physical and spiritual, are as natural to heathen rites as they are entirely foreign to the Christian ordinance. We read how, in broad daylight, multitudes came to John the Baptiser, and were by him dipped in the river Jordan, under the free air of heaven, confessing their sins. We are told that the Man Who had no sins of His own to confess,

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came with those multitudes, and was plunged into the same water. We read that when the society of those who acknowledged Jesus as the Lord was organized on the day of Pentecost, those who gladly received the word of the Apostle and of God were baptised, to the number of three thousand souls. We are familiar with the font in our churches. We see it filled with common water. The congregation are invited to look on and to bear a part, as the minister takes the infant in his arms and pours the water upon it.

Could anything be simpler or more open, anything more liable to be scorned as idle and unmeaning?—Do not attempt, brethren, to apologize for this *simplicity* of Christian baptism: it would be a sin in any Church to overlay that simplicity. He Who appointed it knew how commonplace a rite it was, just to wash with elemental water, and He preferred this to any more elaborate mystery. And think for a moment, brethren, how dear and sacred this simple ordinance has become. Think how we all bless God for having been baptised, what an association has been realized through it for all Christendom. Throughout Europe, throughout

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the world, Christian men confess a brotherhood with all who have been baptised; with all, that is, who have been washed with water according to Christ's appointment.

I referred to the primary celebration of Christian Baptism on the Day of Pentecost. Mark the results of which that baptism was the prelude. Those three thousand, we saw, were baptised, as Peter invited them to be. That was the *first* act in which they were associated together. But what a communion followed! "All that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.....And they, continuing daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people." What a life, for men no better than you and I, for hard-hearted and covetous Jews, to enter upon! Each man gave up his money and his property with cheerfulness and simplicity. Together they worshipped God, and sought to make one another happy. *Praising God, and having favour with all the people.* Does not the picture make us sigh in wonder and envy?

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Well, brethren, their baptism was the same as ours. May we not perhaps learn something, may we not find some encouragement, by looking into the meaning of this common baptism? Let us try.

It is fair to say, as we admitted just now, that the act of baptism is nothing but wetting with ordinary water. But this act is charged of course with a peculiar significance, by those words with which our Lord commanded it to be accompanied, and which are in fact the interpretation of it. "Baptise the nations," said the Lord Jesus to His disciples, "in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." The Christian Minister, when he baptises, obeys this command. Recal what you hear as the babe is held over the font: "I baptise thee in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The wetting with water, and the use of these words, form the Sacrament of Baptism. The rest of the service is only supplemental.

Remark, first, who it is that says, *I* baptise. It is not I, the individual, acting at my own pleasure and discretion. We, who baptise, have no discretion, thank God, in the matter.

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We act *ministerially*, that is, by the authority of Christ. The Church affirms that it is *God* Who baptises. There are many duties which require all the wisdom and holiness of God's most favoured servants to discharge, but yet are not so sacred or so important as this, which may be performed by the most ignorant and careless deacon in the Church. Why is this apparent contradiction? Because, in this sacrament, the wisdom and piety of the clergyman are not to be thought of. God Almighty is to be thought of, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Blessed Spirit; the minister is nothing, except that his office is a witness of the Divine presence and part in the act.

In God's name, then, the minister says, I *baptise* thee. I pour on thee *water*, the sign and instrument of *cleansing*. Undoubtedly the religious ceremony of washing was always accompanied with the idea of cleansing from defilement. Have you ever considered what a lesson has been taught men universally by their Maker, in that He has given them the instinctive consciousness which associates the pollution of the spirit with physical dirt? We have scarcely any language to express our

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simplest notions of what *vice* and *sin* are to the spirit, except what is borrowed from external foulness. Naturally, therefore, those who came to John the Baptiser to be washed in Jordan, came *confessing their sins.* They were thinking not of their bodies, but of their spirits, which used the bodily senses as their instruments. They felt that they were *themselves* foul; that they wanted a real cleansing. They said, to themselves and to their teacher, "Behold, my spirit is foul and impure—*I* am dishonest, revengeful, cruel, unchaste. Who can cleanse *me?* Do I not hear some offer, coming, or professing to come, in the Maker's name, of an inward and real cleansing? What if the offer should be a true one!" And those who afterwards heard the crucified and risen Deliverer proclaimed by His chosen witnesses, and received gladly the tidings of such a Deliverer, felt the same need of a purification. When their hearts were pierced through with a new agony, and they cried out, "Sirs our brothers, what shall we do?" they had the sense of *sin* upon them, the consciousness of a defilement which tainted their very will, the distress of shame, like that of a beggar in filth and rags,

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who might be longing to clasp a benefactor to his heart. They wanted to be delivered from their shame—to be cleansed.

And in both cases, those who spoke in the name of the Heavenly Father, promised the purification which was needed. They knew that when they plunged the sinner into water in the name of the Deliverer, they were giving a more efficacious assurance of such cleansing than words alone could convey. They baptised, they said, *for the remission of sins.*

There was a lesson in these words, as to the secret of spiritual defilement. In what did the foulness of the spirit consist? Many could answer, In *sin.* Yes, but what was sin? The baptisers taught that *sin* was alienation from One Whose pardon, Whose love was a necessity for man. 'You want to be cleansed,' they said to the awakened sinner. 'Well, the God of your spirits, against Whom you have trespassed, from Whom you have strayed, *forgives you.* He admits you into reconciliation and favour. Here is your cleansing. Receiving God's pardon into your inmost souls, you become clean.'

This deep, but most simple, truth was taught more fully by those words which our Saviour

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commanded to be used together with the sacred washing. 'I baptise thee,' says the minister, 'in [or, into] the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.'

"The Name of the Father." Consider how much this must mean, if it means anything at all. It says surely to each baptised person, The Almighty Father is a Father to *you*. He claims you as His own child. You may have been born in sin, bred in sin, you may be thoroughly tainted and defiled with sin. You may be ignorant of God, thinking only of Him as a dark mysterious Being, behind the clouds, to Whom you have done inexpiable wrong. In spite of all that, welcome to this washing, to the name of Father. God Himself seeks you, claims and receives you, as His child. It is His doing, and not yours. You have certainly not been persuading Him to love you; but He did not want to be persuaded: He is your Father. Learn to regard yourself as His son or daughter.

The "Name of the Son" is added. The first announcement of the Christian preacher is that the Almighty Maker has sent His Son to take our nature upon Him, that He gave up that

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Son to be put to death by the wicked hands of men, and that He raised Him from the dead, and has exalted Him to be a Prince and a Saviour. The Son of God is thus set forth as the Eternal Mediator between the Father and His human children; as the Reconciler, Who with His own body bridges over the gulf of separation which sin has made; as the King and Lord of men, the Lord of their hearts and consciences, present though unseen, delivering and not crushing; as the way to the Father, and the life of men. The baptiser therefore has been commanded to proclaim, The Son of God calls you to Himself. In Him is reconciliation, in Him is strength. Accept Him as your Deliverer. Plead His Death and Resurrection, His infinite Sonship and Sacrifice, with the Father. Understand that in yourself is no good thing, but that in His Name you may have righteousness and salvation. I baptise thee into the Name of the Son. Cleave to that Name with all your soul.

And then there is, thirdly, the 'Name of the Holy Ghost,' a Name without which the other two would be powerless. On the first day of Christian Baptism, the Spirit of the

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Father and of the Son was poured out, according to the promise of Jesus, with sudden warmth and energy. Those who were invited to be baptised into His Name, were not left in ignorance of His nature. They were delivered out of the vague or foolish notions which they like other men might have had of spirits and of spiritual influence. They perceived the Spirit to be a Spirit of light and warmth. They understood the possibility, though they could not have defined the process, of being penetrated in their own spirits by the Common Divine Spirit. They knew that it was the province of the Holy Ghost who proceeds from the Father and the Son to fuse together discordant human atoms into a noble and happy brotherhood. The Name therefore was interpreted by facts; was proved not to be dead, but living, the Name of a Person. It was good news therefore to those who were feeling the burden of ignorance and strife, when the Christian Apostle said, Be baptised into this Name, for the remission of your sins.

Perhaps this third Name is more likely than the others to call up the thought of that view of Baptism which St. Paul has given us and

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upon which he insists with great emphasis. He speaks of Baptism as setting forth a Death and a Life. He bids the baptised regard themselves as having been buried and having risen again in their Baptism. He alludes, no doubt, to that dipping under water, for which our ordinary baptism by sprinkling is a less forcible, perhaps, but more convenient, substitute. What He *meant* is sufficiently expounded by the words we have been considering. It is well not to separate the name of the Spirit from that of the *Father* and the *Son* when we are considering the regeneration of which baptism is the witness. Ignorance of the Father, independence of the Son, as well as want of the Spirit of life, go to make up death. The Apostle speaks of that death which belongs not to the mere animal nature, but to the properly *human*, or the spiritual nature. To be baptised into the name of a Father who had not been known as a Father, of a Son of God who had not been revealed as a Saviour, of a Divine Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son, whose genial warmth as a filial and brotherly Spirit had not been felt, was a call, backed by the whole will and power and election of Almighty

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God, out of death into the only true life. Sin, the Apostle testifies, is death. How can you, who have died to sin through God's gracious adoption of you into His life, live any longer therein? Such is his most reasonable expostulation.

I am doing what I can, dear brethren, to lead you to look *through baptism* to Him who reveals Himself in it. I believe that this method of regarding baptism is the only one consistent with its proper character, and that in this way only can we learn to appreciate its real worth. It is the very property of a sacrament, to witness by a sign of a thing signified. We have been considering what *is* signified in baptism. We have noticed the obvious meaning of the washing, and we have touched upon the significance which our Lord's own interpretation has given to it. Such reflections can alone prepare us to meet the cavils and the indifference which we complain of as prevailing with regard to this sacrament.

There are some who contend that it is unreasonable to baptise unconscious infants, baptism being properly a seal set upon the faith of persons who can understand what they profess. Grant this view of baptism, and

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their conclusion is scarcely to be resisted. But I come back to our first principles. I repeat to myself the baptismal formula, "I baptise thee into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." And I ask what is there here to exclude infants? Are they not to be baptised into the name of the Father? May not Christian parents regard their little ones as the children of God in Heaven, until they are old enough to be asked whether they would like to have God for their Father, or not? Are they not to be baptised into the name of the Son? What? is the Lord Jesus Christ not their Saviour until they have deliberately chosen Him? Must He not choose them first? Has He not chosen them? Can we pretend, or can we bear, to be doubtful for a moment whether our little children may rightly be taught to look upon Jesus as their Lord and Friend and Head, *before* they can reasonably be asked whether they wish to be His members or not? Are they not to be baptised into the name of the Holy Ghost—of the Spirit of truth and joy and love? Who can nurture and train our children, except this Spirit of God? Who is it that makes them obedient, gentle, affectionate,

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honourable, except the Spirit who dwelt in the Child Jesus?

Surely, my brethren, the difficulty would be to say *when* we should be baptised, if it is ever too early. But if we accept baptism as God's call and adoption of us, bringing us into His Home, pledging the Father, the Son, and the Spirit to be ours; if we are thoroughly persuaded that we cannot take the initiative with God, but can only accept His grace and election, we shall not think it strange that the Church has been led by His Providence to admit the youngest babes into His sacred family. There may be hardly any of those who hear me, who object to the baptism of infants. But we are all of us in danger of lapsing into views against which the baptism of infants is a witness and protest,—the views, I mean, which regard ourselves as commencing our reconciliation with God, and forget the great atonement which God has effected with us, and the Love with which He acts up to that atonement towards every man. When we see an adult baptised, it is possible to fancy that he has chosen God; when we see an infant baptised, we can only believe that God has chosen *it*.

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But there is an indifference as to Christian baptism, far more widely spread than any hostility against it. How are we to deal with this? Shall we try to intimidate parents into bringing their children to be baptised, by telling them it is a positive command of Christ, which it is perilous to neglect, by warning them that they may not only incur punishment themselves, but may possibly plunge their innocent babes into hopeless ruin by so heinous a violation of an order distinct, universal, and easy?—There is some temptation to use arguments apparently so scriptural and so crushing. But if we were to try threatening appeals of this kind, they would stick in our throats. Something in us would whisper that they could not be right. That remonstrance would be virtually a recollection that baptism is an utterance of God's adopting grace. God is willing, we say, to put His seal upon a child of our fallen race: and shall we drive people to *submit* to this blessing, lest a worse thing befal them? What a profaning of the ordinance! one might well exclaim: what an insult to God's Fatherly Love!

What then is needed, brethren, that baptism may have its due honour amongst us? A con-

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viction of that Fatherly Love which baptism declares; a sense of the infinite value of that Love. Baptism is a great organ of the Church, incessantly expressing and defining God's Love to His fallen children. What is the sin of neglecting it? The sin lies in carelessness about the good-will of our Maker, in indifference about membership in His family, in the selfishness which wants to make every act a barter. The harm is to the Church and the world in the declining sense of God's fatherly goodness, of the equal brotherhood of men before God. If baptism is not understood or cared for, the rich will forget that they are brothers of the poor, and both will forget that they have a Father in heaven. But if the question is to be even tolerated, What good do I get by being baptised? What loss do I incur by not being baptised? we are drawn into giving up the very principle of baptism, we are unawares altering its very nature. It is a question, not of what is to be gained or to be lost, but of what is decent behaviour towards God when He offers to make us or our children members of His family. It is a question of thankfully yielding ourselves and ours to God, when He

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invites us to be His and not our own, or of standing on our own solitary ground, and each man making Himself his centre.

Yes, brethren, Baptism descends from God and points upward to God. It comes with a benediction, and not with a curse. Its language is not, Take care lest God destroy you, if you do not secure His favour. It says, God is good to men and loves them, as it is the nature of a Father to do. It declares God's goodness to the unbaptised, as well as to the baptised. It is the glory of Baptism to utter forth that free unreserved witness concerning God. It is a pity indeed to stint it of that glory, and to ascribe to it the melancholy office of narrowing God's favour within any limits. Oh, how poor and unreasonable and intolerable do our limitations and reserves appear, when we look away from earth and our distinctions to the brightness of God's Love as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ! Do we see *there* any desire to persecute poor unhappy mortals into compliances with arbitrary commands? No, but we see a compassionate yearning, which will not rest, for the welfare and the love of every one of those whom God created to be happy, and to be

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happy in Himself only. Of what else but that yearning is baptism the utterance? "Go, teach all nations, baptising them into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," announcing to them their true bliss, assuring them that the Supreme God bestows that bliss upon them, only warning them not to choose darkness instead of light, ill-will instead of peace.

This warning, indeed, is uttered by every act of baptism, and it is one which our hearts and consciences respond to, to their very centres. It curses *selfishness* in the name of God, and for the love of men. But it is no solitary voice. It has an echo in every heart. Self-seeking is sufficiently proved to be out of place in a world of God's making. It is a monstrous thing to try and persuade ourselves that self-love is necessary or innocent. To be wrapped up in self is death and darkness.

Out of this accursed state, to which all degradation and strife and wretchedness belong, we are called by baptism; but not, most assuredly, by baptism alone. It would be idle to insist upon baptism as a token of God's call and God's interest in us, if He were not drawing us, and shewing His interest in us, in

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countless wonderful ways. Baptism is no *exception* to God's dealings with us. It is a glowing *specimen* of them. It names a God who day by day watches over us, protects us, keeps us out of the sins into which we should plunge, inspires us with good thoughts, and helps us to carry them into effect. I should not dare to speak of baptism as a sign of God's Love to each and all of us who are now present here, unless I were sure that that Love is real, and is giving forth signs of itself of which we can perceive something, though not the thousandth part.

But while the Truth and Love of God are thus commending themselves in ways of infinite variety, I know not where we could find a clearer indication of that end to which God's love would invariably lead us, than we have in Baptism. If the enjoyment of God's presence and glorious goodness be indeed the highest good of men, and if we can only enter into God's Love by sharing it and making every neighbour a brother, surely this is what Baptism sets before us. It is an admission into a Family, and that the Family of God. It testifies of the Father over all, of the strong Elder Brother sustaining all, of the Spirit of adoption granted

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to all. What is there better for us, brethren, than to accept what is thus given us, and to go forward with all our energies to the goal of perfect worship?

Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, let us hold fast our profession and our privileges. Let us never give in to the delusion that our sins can take away our holiness, that God's forgiveness exhausted itself in one effort on our behalf at the font. Let our baptism be to us a continual encouragement, as it was meant to be. Let us be sure that the God who received us in our infancy, will not forsake us in our manhood or old age. Let Him be our hope and our trust. Our past sins, our present weakness may at least teach us the lesson that in ourselves we are nothing, that we must flee to God for refuge. May that lesson be brought home to our hearts; and may every day's experience deepen the sense of our own unworthiness and of the glory which God has put upon us in Christ. May we be taught the folly of choosing to be strangers and foreigners, the blessedness of being chosen to be fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God.

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THE LORD'S SUPPER,

THE MOST SACRED BOND OF WORSHIP.

BY

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THE LORD'S SUPPER,

THE MOST SACRED BOND OF WORSHIP.

REVELATION v. 12.

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

THE subject which I have been asked to bring before you to-night is, the relation in which the Holy Communion stands to Worship. I trust to be enabled to show, that it is indeed "the most sacred bond of worship."

1. I must ask you first to join with me in considering what we mean by worship,—what worship, in fact, really is. It is one of those words which we are constantly using ourselves, and hearing others use, without ascertaining with any exactness what we or they mean by it,—without ascertaining, further, whether such

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meaning as we attach to the word corresponds to the real truth of the thing. For example, we talk about 'places of worship'; as, for instance, in the common question, What place of worship do you attend?—by which is simply meant, What church or chapel do you go to? And so, if we were suddenly asked what worship was, we should most likely reply that it was offering up prayer and praise and thanksgiving, or giving glory to Almighty God in buildings set apart for that purpose—nothing more or less. But, if so, our notion of worship must be a much narrower one than St. Paul's was. He says, "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God." In other words, "Do all that you do, as worshippers, and in the spirit of worship: let your work be worship: let your rest be worship: let the beginning, middle, and end of your life be worship."

The words sound, at the first hearing, strained and unnatural. "How can these things be?" we ask; how can we make the words of St. Paul good to ourselves, and true for ourselves? Are they not the words of a saint, perhaps of an enthusiast,—not fitted for

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the ordinary, sober workers of this every-day, common-place world? Let us see.

This much, at any rate, is clear—St. Paul is speaking of the very commonest things,—of the every-day wants and necessities of humanity, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do." If then St. Paul's words are true words, the fault must be in ourselves, if we can see no connection between the common things of life and the glory or the worship of God.

And, so, looking again at the question, what worship is, we begin to see that we have been too apt to mistake the outward form, or rather one of the outward forms of worship, for the thing itself, the sign for the thing signified, the dress and vesture of worship for its reality and substance. And yet the sign, the vesture, the form bear witness with no insufficient emphasis or distinctness for the living spirit which they render visible. All speak of reverence, submission, sacrifice. The lowly posture of the body is, as we all know, nothing in itself, if it be not the shadow of a reverence within. The undercurrent of every true form of prayer is submission; its language and burden, "Thy will be done." The praises and thanksgivings

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of the congregation are an offering and a sacrifice, which, as we all confess, to be worth anything must be inward and spiritual.

True worship, then, is in fact the bowing of the spirit before the living God. It is the homage of the spirit of the created to the Creator, —of the spirit of the man to "the God of the spirits of all flesh,"—of the spirit of the child to the Father of spirits, that one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. Submission of the human spirit to the Divine Spirit is, then, not only the ground and substance of all worship, but also the root and life of all its forms. And just because that submission of the spirit to the living God and Father is the true *human* attitude,—just because it is the inward attitude which alone can become all the sons of men at all moments of their existence,—therefore the forms of worship are co-extensive with the life of humanity. There is nothing so trivial but it may become the garb of worship,—nothing so common-place and oft-repeated, that the spirit of worship may not pierce and leaven it. Every man's work does thus, in the truest sense, become his religion. The work of life in all its thousand

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shapes becomes the most general form of worship. The eating and drinking, the refreshments of life, become, like its work, things done to the glory of God. The work of the six days, the rest of the seventh day, become fit exponents of the submission of the spirit of man to Him who said, "Six days shalt thou labour, and the seventh day thou shalt rest;" and who would have us His children work and rest because He Himself, our Father, has worked and rested, and does still work and rest.

And, if places of worship, as we call them, mean anything, they mean this. If times and forms of worship therein mean anything, they mean this. They mean, not that those places and hours are consecrated to the worship of God, while the work and traffic and common things of life are given up to the worship of self, or mammon, or the devil;—but that all things are sacred to Him, who has built the whole fabric of human life upon Himself; who, because He is the eternal Father of the eternal Son, has therefore made us fathers and children; who, because[1] He has created and constituted mankind in that Son, has given us marriage to

[1] Col. i. 15—17.

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represent the bond that binds the spirits of all and each to Him; who, because the Son is the first-born amongst many brethren, has made us brothers and sisters; and who, lastly, because we are his children and made in his image, would have us do as He does,—would have us both work and rest,—work for Him, and rest in Him.

2. If then worship be, truly speaking, the bowing of the spirit before the God and Maker, the Father and Lord of the spirits of all flesh,—if it be something which can transfigure and glorify the whole tissue of life, lighting up every fragment and particle of it into some form or act of sacrifice,—how, we must inquire in the next place, is this true bending and submission of the spirit rendered possible? That it is the true human attitude, the attitude which every son of man ought to assume and was created to assume, towards God, we cannot doubt. But how may we, warped as we are by sin and infirmity, learn, by slow degrees at any rate, to take it up? That we do not do so naturally and spontaneously, we must all of us by sad experience have discovered. That the best of us are very very far from having attained to it,

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they themselves will be the first to allow. It is only the darkness of ignorance and self-conceit that can hide the fact from us. The light of the glorious knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ, while it shows us the goal, shows us also our own distance from it.

Some help we may find towards replying to this question, by considering the very meaning of the word which is occupying our attention. It must surely be right to connect the word "worship" with "worth" or worthiness. I would not insist upon this for a moment, or lay any unwarrantable stress upon it. But is it not transparently clear, dear brethren, the moment it is suggested to our minds, that worship must have this origin, and can have no other;—that if we are ever to be worshippers in spirit and in truth, it must be through a sense of the worthiness of Him who is the object of our worship?

I should despair, brethren, of ever *proving* a point like this. I only ask you to look and see for yourselves. Do we not find that, in the case of our fellow-men, we can only reverence them in proportion as we see them to be worthy of reverence? We may show respect

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to them,—we may reverence the relationship in which they stand towards us, as of God's appointment, and endeavour to act and feel accordingly; but we cannot reverence the *person*, except in so far as that person proves himself worthy of our reverence. And, further, do we not find that the more free we are from envy and jealousy and similar meannesses and despicabilities, the more we do actually reverence, —that is, inwardly bow before,—those who have approved themselves worthy thereof?

If our spirits are free, except in so far as they are bound by sin,—if God is calling us not from one bondage to another, but out of bondage into freedom,—if the only conceivable human freedom consists in knowing God and doing his will,—then surely what is true of us with reference to our fellow-men is true of us also with reference to God. Here too we can only reverence, that is we can only worship, in proportion as we perceive the worthiness of Him who calls us to worship. The body of the slave may be bowed by force or terror. But the spirit of the man,—above all, the spirit of the *child*,—can only be bowed by a glad, loving sense of the supreme, unspeakable worthiness, glory, and loveliness of his God and Father.

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We cannot then be surprised to find that when the door was opened in heaven, and the throne of God and of the Lamb was revealed to the eye of St. John, he should have discovered that the perfect worship of the kingdom of heaven has this for its steadfast ground and never-failing spring,—namely, this sense of the unutterable worthiness of Him that sitteth upon the throne and of the Lamb. He tells us that "when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to Him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, the four-and-twenty elders fall down before Him that sat on the throne, and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, *Thou art worthy*, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power, for Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." He tells us, again, in the next chapter, that when the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, the Lamb as it had been slain, had taken the book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne, "the four beasts and four-and-twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours,

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which are the prayers of saints. And they sang a new song, saying, *Thou art worthy* to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." And then he goes on thus: "I beheld, and I heard the voices of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, *Worthy is the Lamb* that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four-and-twenty elders fell down and worshipped Him that liveth for ever and ever."

3. If this be so, if the worship of men

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and angels and of all created things clearly grows out of the discovery of the worthiness of Him who is their Maker, it is equally clear that there could be no worship of God amongst men, if He did not discover or reveal Himself to them. Men may feel after God. They cannot help doing so. He makes them do so. They may feel after Him, but they cannot find Him, unless He first finds them and shows Himself to them. Failing to find Him, they may stoop to idols: they may degrade their souls to the uttermost: they may grovel and crouch in the dust and mire of base counterfeit imitations of worship: they may fling religion after religion, superstition after superstition, into the yawning gulf which only God Himself can fill. But worship truly so called is an impossibility, until the loving God calls his children around Him, shows Himself to them, and opens their heavy eyes that they may see his beauty.

And thus, all that bears witness of the true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, becomes an incentive to worship, a bond of worship. In other words, all that tells or reminds us what God is, does, by the very fact of doing so, tend to draw out the worship of our spirits towards

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Him; does bind us closer to Him, and therefore also to one another. For the nearer we are drawn to the common centre of attraction, the nearer are we also thereby drawn to one another. And that which is the most complete and the mightiest witness for the character of God, will be at the same time the most powerful incentive to worship, the most sacred bond of worship. In order to complete our subject, therefore, we have to inquire whether the Lord's Supper does indeed bear any such witness for the exceeding worthiness of God.

And indeed, brethren, this is surely a claim which is too often forgotten, and which requires to be again and again vindicated by all Christian people for this which is confessedly the highest and deepest utterance of the worship of the Church. Too often our conceptions of the Sacrament take an altogether lower range, and are occupied with altogether secondary and even selfish considerations. We inquire diligently as to the nature of the bread and wine, and their relation to the body and blood of Christ. We speak of the duty of communicating. We affirm that the sacraments are "deep channels of grace," and so forth. And thus our minds are taken

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up with fears as to the danger of incurring guilt if we stay away, or with hopes as to the possibility of procuring some blessing if we come. Meanwhile we forget that the Lord's Supper can only be the best utterance of the Church's worship, because it first bears witness to the perfections of Him whom we worship,—that it can only be a channel of grace, because the gracious and loving God meets us in it;—and that what we really need is not faith in the bread and wine as channels of grace, but trust in Him, who is laying his fatherly hand upon us to bless us, not then only, but every day of our lives,—who is feeding us with the bread of life, not then only, but yesterday and to-day and for ever.

Let us consider then the witness for God which the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper offers, or rather earnestly and emphatically presses upon our notice.

(*a*) First of all we have the simple words of institution,—"This do in remembrance of Me." They were, as we all know, the words of Jesus, spoken by Him when now his earthly life was fast drawing to a close, but before his death. They were spoken to those friends

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with whom for three years He had been eating and drinking, talking and working, as the Son of Man amongst the children of men. To remember Him was to them to remember Jesus of Nazareth, the gentle, loving Friend, the wise, gracious Teacher, the mighty Speaker and Worker. To remember Him is to us, at the distance of more than eighteen hundred years, to remember the earthly life of the same Jesus, who was born in the inn at Bethlehem, and grew up as a child, subject to his parents, at Nazareth;—who was baptized by John in the river Jordan, and was tempted in the wilderness, and went about preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, doing good, and healing all who were oppressed of the devil;—who was called in derision by his enemies "The friend of publicans and sinners;"—who could say of Himself, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head."

In other words, the Supper of the Lord, under its very first and most obvious aspect, is a witness for the incarnation of the Son of God. There would be no meaning in it

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at all, if it were not for this. The Lord's Supper rests entirely upon the fact of the incarnation,—is a speaking witness for it. Every time that we meet together to eat of the bread and drink of the cup, we show the Lord's earthly life,—we declare that the Word became flesh,—that the Son of God was made very man of the substance of the Virgin Mary his mother;—that "forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same."

This being the case, brethren, need I stay to point out what a witness the Lord's Supper must bear for the character of God? Remember, all the grace and truth that we see in the earthly life of Jesus are but the reflection of the grace and truth of God Himself. "He that hath seen Me," said He, "hath seen the Father." He is "the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his Person." And let us remember further, that the incarnation of the Son of God is the mystery of mysteries,—the mystery which includes all other mysteries, the great abiding witness for the love of God,—the eternal protest against all the dark, faithless, suspicious thoughts which we are tempted

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to entertain of Him. For truly He "sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."

(*b*) Again: St. Paul says to the Corinthians, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." If we eat and drink in remembrance of his human earthly life, we eat and drink also in remembrance of his true, human death. As we use, and rightly use, the material substances of bread and wine in remembrance and by reason of the fact that He took a material body of flesh and blood like our own,—so do we break the bread and pour out the wine, in remembrance that He gave his body to death, and shed his blood on the cross, for us. It is not only the body and the blood—the human body and the human blood—of our Lord Jesus Christ that we are invited to meditate upon in the Lord's Supper,—but it is also the body which was given, and the blood which was shed, for us. "The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee;"—"The Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee."

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And herein lies a witness for God, which we all of us acknowledge. Be our theory, if we have one, of the nature of the atonement what it may,—explain it, or attempt to explain it, as we will,—we all feel that it does in a most wonderful way express, as no words could express, the Father's tender love and anxious concern for men. We know that He who gave Himself up through life and upon the cross for us, did so in obedience to his Father's will. For St. Paul says that He "became *obedient* unto death, even the death of the cross." We take therefore the cross of Christ to be the measure of the love of God. We argue with St. Paul, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" We feel that He who was lifted up on the cross does indeed declare thereby his own love for his brethren,—does indeed declare also the Father's love for his children;—that, if the heart of the Son was wounded on the cross, the heart of the Father must have been even more wounded still;—that, if the Son, lifted up on the cross, draws all men to Himself,—He draws them also, through Himself, to God. If

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therefore our own spirits are for one moment constrained to join in the song of the Angels, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing,"—we feel that the same voice of worship must pass onwards through the Lamb, as He Himself would surely desire it should, unto his Father and our Father, unto his God and our God; as, indeed, St. John tells us it does, when he says that, in reply to the song of the Angels, he heard every creature saying, "Blessing and honour, and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

(*c*) Thus wonderfully does the Lord's Supper show the Lord's life and the Lord's death; and, in showing these, show the Father. But something more than this we want; something more than this we surely have. If our demands are exorbitant, the treasury upon which we may draw to satisfy them is boundless. Jesus of Nazareth lived and died more than eighteen hundred years ago. What if the love which could only express itself by that life and that death, should have grown cold, worn out by the

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sins and follies and ingratitude of men? The Lord's Supper silently testifies that this is not so. That life and that death, it keeps on declaring month by month, year by year, century by century,—that life and that death were for you, brethren, and for me, and for every soul of man born into this world. That life and that death were the life and the death *not* of One who took our nature upon Him for a moment, out of mere caprice, or in consequence of a transient fit of pity and fondness,—but of One who is "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," "the Root and Offspring of David,"—of One who took our flesh and blood upon Him, not in order that He might become our brother, but because He was our brother,—of One, in whom and by whom and unto whom mankind were created, and in whom they consist,—of One, who from the first has been, and to the last will be, the Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, —of One who is the source and author of every true, and wise, and righteous, and loving thought that ever visited the heart of heathen or Christian, of saint or sinner. His love, and the love of that God who has made a covenant with mankind in Him, can only grow cold

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when "the host of heaven can be numbered," or "the sand of the sea measured." We eat the bread and drink the cup in token of an undying love, which can alone preserve our bodies and souls unto everlasting life. We eat of the one bread and drink of the one cup, in token that, and because, "we being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." We eat and drink, in token that, and because, we have no life and no light but in Him, all life and all light in Him; in token that, and because, we are in Him all children of the one God and Father, all brothers and sisters one of another.

It can hardly be necessary, I think, to pursue this part of the subject any further; otherwise I ought to speak, more particularly than I have yet done, of the Priest and the Sacrifice,—the High Priest who once for all offers up Himself; of eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of Man,—that is, partaking of his perfect humanity, his true life, and being assimilated thereby unto Him through the power of his indwelling Spirit. But I think it must be by this time sufficiently clear that the Lord's Supper does indeed most wonderfully declare

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God to us. Declaring God to us, it at the same time declares and seals our communion or fellowship both with Him and with one another. Thus it is not the Lord's Supper only, but the Holy Communion also. Further, as it declares God to us,—as it declares and seals our fellowship with Him and with one another,—it becomes not the Lord's Supper only, nor the Holy Communion only, but the Holy Eucharist also—the great thanksgiving service of the Church, the most perfect utterance of the Church's worship. Lastly, being all this, we may well call it "the most sacred bond of worship," seeing that it so gently and tenderly constrains us with filial reverence to call God "Father"—with brotherly love to claim men as our brethren.

I trust, brethren, that what I have been saying this evening may sound to many, if not to all of you, quite familiar and common-place. I should wish it to be so. But however that may be, I am quite sure we must all confess that these common truths are in practice sadly forgotten by us,—by us ministers of God's word and sacraments, as well as by you unto whom we are appointed to minister. Has not the silent witness of the Lord's Supper been

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almost unheeded by us? Have we not done our best to destroy its evidence by strifes and disputes about the meaning of its details,—or at least, by our general selfishness, worldliness, and mammon-worship? What with covetousness and the love of money on the one hand, and drudgery taking the place of labour on the other, the spirit of worship can scarcely breathe amongst us. Every witness for man's true estate is precious;—none is more precious than this of the Lord's Supper. We need all the help we can get to enable us to shake off the incubus which oppresses us, and which threatens to crush out the true life both of rich and poor alike. The respectable classes come indeed to church, for the most part, because they are used to do so,—because the form of worship is to them the reality also. The working classes, as they are called, stay away; for, not understanding that their daily work may be a daily worship, they care little or nothing about forms and witnesses of worship. Meanwhile the highest form that religion commonly takes amongst us seems to be that of an anxious concern for our safety after death. Very different was the religion of St. Paul, saying,

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"I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Very different was the religion of Moses, saying to God, "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin. Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of thy book which Thou hast written." And again, "I pray Thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know Thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people."

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THE SABBATH-DAY,

THE REFRESHMENT OF WORSHIP.

BY

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THE SABBATH-DAY,

THE REFRESHMENT OF WORSHIP.

St. Matthew xi. 28.

Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

We may surely believe, brethren, that there is something better than either blind force of habit, or fear of what change may bring, in the fondness which clings obstinately to existing institutions. We English are famous for this tenacious conservatism,—a conservatism often really stronger in professed Liberals than in professed Conservatives. It may be partly due to love of ease, and partly to timidity; but is not one of the roots of it a conviction that there is and has been a wise and righteous Governor presiding over human history, and

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that the institutions "which be are ordained of God"?

Certainly those who cherish this faith will reverence the great customs of their fathers which have come down to them. They will not lazily conclude that whatever is, is best; but they will be sure that in whatever is, there is some token of Divine purpose, and they will be the more anxious that nothing undivine should corrupt or darken that which is of God. Thus with regard to our English Sunday. We have a custom, as noticeable as any of our national customs, of distinguishing the Sunday from the other days of weeks by our way of spending it, and especially by going on that day to Church or some other place of worship. If we believe in a living Ruler of men and nations, we shall not necessarily suppose that all the prevalent feelings concerning Sunday are to be justified. We shall have a right to protest,—as I think it is our duty to contend,—against the ungodliness which tries to shut up worship to one day in the week. But we shall require strong evidence indeed to persuade us that our religious Sunday is *not* a Divine institution, and shall be ready to ask reverently

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what the principle of such a day is, and how that principle, if a true one, may be guarded from corruption.

It is desirable to be careful and clear as to the position which we take up in our reflections upon the Sabbath-Day and its meaning, because there is a good deal of controversy going on respecting the ground of this distinction which thus separates one day in seven from the other six. You may be aware that, whilst the prevailing opinion of English Christians connects the Lord's Day with the Jewish Sabbath, there are many who maintain that the old Sabbath has nothing whatever to do with the modern Sunday, and that to quote the Fourth Commandment in connection with the observance of Sunday is a complete mistake. I do not forget the arguments by which this view is supported; but we may leave them on one side, as not affecting our inquiries, if we are willing to pursue the method,—which I conceive to be a sound and practical one,—of taking things as they are, in the belief that whatever institution justifies itself is, in the firmest sense, of Divine appointment and authority, and of testing each, when it is called in question, by

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its consistency with the Divine order, and its value in the education of men. Is our English Sunday rooted *now* in the mind and will of God?—That is the true question; except as throwing light upon that, every other is immaterial.

What then are the characteristics of Sunday amongst us?—(1) It is a day of *Rest.* And (2) it is a day of *Worship.* My object this evening is to point out the relation of Rest to Worship; to shew how the idea of Rest coalesces with the idea of Worship.

We are at least warranted in calling the Lord's Day *a* Sabbath Day. For fifteen centuries the first day of the week has borne throughout Christendom the character of a Day of Rest. In England, more than in many other Christian countries, both law and custom have enforced the suspension of ordinary labour upon the Sunday. If therefore we understand the name 'Sabbath' to denote a Day of Rest,—one day in seven, that is, so set apart,—we are only implying what is the obvious fact in speaking of our English *Sabbath-Day.*

Now let us contemplate for a moment this Day of Rest. Let us consider what the Provi-

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dence which governs the world and the Church has done for us in appointing and preserving it.

Take the most outside view of it. Think of the labour by which, in all kinds and departments, the business of the world is carried on, from the labour of the highest functionary of the state to that of the meanest drudge. Forget the idle, whose idleness cannot be of God's appointment, and follow the busy, for whom the great Taskmaster has found occupation. You may easily call up such a view of labour, that the mind will grow weary with the very contemplation of it. And where the labour is not voluntary, but an obligation of stern necessity, as in the case of the poor man, who cannot regulate the hours or the quantity of his own work, but is compelled by the most imperious exigencies to begin each morning at the same fixed hour and not to leave off till he is released at the same fixed hour at night,—you will feel much more sensibly the enormous pressure of such a daily existence. Now the custom of a Sabbath-Day furnishes a balance to that pressure. Speculative men may fancy, if they please, that they could improve upon this arrangement. An experiment has been

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made of substituting a tenth day for a seventh. At present however the presumption is decidedly that the rest of the Sabbath-Day is that which best suits the condition of toiling man. I know I have not to persuade you, brethren,—I am in fact only incidentally reminding you,—of the blessed part which our Sabbath bears in the economy of our regular life. Perhaps nothing would give us a more forcible impression of it than if we were to imagine the Sabbath-Day abolished, and to conceive how the working portion of mankind, and especially those who live by daily labour, would fare in such an event.

Those who benefit most directly by the rest of the Sabbath-Day are the poorer classes, that is, the immense numerical majority of mankind. This very circumstance indicates that the Sabbath-Day has expressly a social or national value. If we had no other conception of the Sabbath-Day but that the routine of productive labour is on it suspended, we should still have the strongest *national* interest in upholding it. Those who most habitually think of themselves as members of a nation will be the best able to enter into that ordinary view which we have been considering.

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It is natural therefore to find that the Jewish prophets, whilst putting forward simply this view of their Sabbath, felt so keenly about it, because the idea of the nation, and the interests of the poorer members of it, were so sacred to them. It is worth while to read continuously some of those discourses of Isaiah which contain the most frequently quoted passages concerning the Sabbath, say from the fifty-sixth to the fifty-ninth Chapters. I will only quote a specimen from the fifty-eighth Chapter. You will recognise the concluding words of it as the most familiar. But in the discourse of which the last two verses manifestly form a part, we find that the prophet is complaining vehemently of those who were devoted to religious ordinances, and neglected justice and freedom. "Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast and an acceptable day to the Lord?—Is not *this* the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the

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hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?" Mark, brethren, the spirit which burns in those words—words which should haunt our memories till we are mastered and penetrated by their spirit;—and then hear what the prophet adds in the same strain concerning the poor man's Day of Rest. "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and shalt honour Him, [not on Sabbath-Days only, but on all days,] not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

One remark now as to the relation of the Jewish Sabbath to our own. Imagine any reader entering with real sympathy into this Chapter of Isaiah, kindling with the noble warmth of his words, seeing their reasonableness.

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I need not ask you to imagine some one else,—every one here present can take up, I am sure, that position for himself. But hold these feelings in your mind, and suppose yourselves to be told that Christianity, or Christ, had abolished the Sabbath-Day: would you not feel as if mankind must have incurred, then, a terrible loss?—But, when you look round on Christendom, and observe that Christianity has not, as a matter of fact, purged the week of its Sabbath, but has encircled the Day of Rest with a peculiar glory, will it not seem to you idle to say that our Sabbath has nothing to do with the Jewish, and rests upon quite another ground? Will you not exclaim in your hearts that, at any rate, both seem to be founded on the wise love of God, and that whatever has *that* foundation need not seek for a better one?

Already we find the external relief from physical labour, which the Sabbath-Day brings to the toiling multitudes, involving something beyond itself. National freedom, the deliverance of the oppressed from drudgery, the breaking of every yoke,—these are great matters, and for these a Sabbath-Day is a witness. We are

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led on to think of true rest, relief, refreshment. The commonest repose points to that which is deeper. It is not that the same word suggests different things, that we pass from Rest in one sense, to Rest in another sense. The *thing* is suggestive, and not the word only. There is something necessarily *sacramental* about ordinary rest. The outward sign tells of the thing signified. You say that such an one is resting. You may mean only that his limbs are resting; but you feel that that is a very imperfect, a mutilated description of Rest.

If *the man* rests, there must be inward repose, as well as bodily rest. You can conceive a person whose body is untired, but who is utterly restless and weary *himself:* you do not care much for the state of the limbs, when *their* repose is only mocking the fatigue of the spirit.

In offering *rest*, therefore, to men in general, a Sabbath-Day awakens of necessity the desire for true inward rest, and ought to meet that desire and satisfy it. If the Maker of men wishes their bodies to be at ease, does He not also wish their hearts and minds to be at ease? Unless the Sabbath is a mockery, there must be a rest somewhere to be found for man as

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men, for spiritual beings, for the reason, the affections, the conscience.

And so it is. God has taught men from the beginning to seek rest in Himself, and in Him only. It is an old story, that of men's weariness, their want of rest,—an old story, which yet has to be told over and over again. The Son of God knew what common aspirations, what universal longings and hopes He was meeting, when He said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

But observe, brethren, how the need of rest, and the offer of rest, were associated in the old Hebrew mind with thoughts of the Sabbath-Day. One of those Chapters of Isaiah which I commended to your study, the fifty-seventh, preceding that from which I have just quoted, is full of declarations of the Power of God to give rest and refreshment, of the power of human vanity to weary its victim. The prophet has been describing the vain efforts of those who seek help elsewhere than in God; and he says of these, "Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way,"—in thy manifold journeyings hither and thither. But he adds: "Thus saith the

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high and the lofty One that inhabiteth Eternity, Whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.....Peace, peace, to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord; and I will heal him. But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

Such thoughts and assurances would naturally be brought home to the mind of a thoughtful Israelite by the Divinely-given day of rest. We may be sure that the Sabbath of the Lord his God was powerful both in stirring up the longings of his heart, and in quieting them. Must he not have thought, when he blessed God for the return of his Sabbath rest, of Him Whose word to the contrite soul was Peace, Who said that He would revive the spirit of the weary by Himself dwelling in it? What assurances were these for a weary, desponding, heart-broken Israelite to receive! And do they not chime in, dear brethren, with those later heavenly messages which have made

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all temporal things indeed more utterly unsatisfying to men, but which have revealed to men a rest and satisfaction beyond their hopes?

It seems needless to press home to your feelings the vanity and vexation of spirit, which are still after so many ages the curse of the world, the proof of its emptiness. Still—

> "We look before and after,
> And pine for what is not;
> Our sincerest laughter
> With some pain is fraught;
> Our sweetest songs are those which tell of saddest thought."

Do we ever see any one who appears to have found rest and satisfaction in earthly things? Not many assuredly: *some* perhaps we may know, who seem to us to be wanting nothing, craving nothing, but what they have got in the pursuits and treasures of earth. But what do we think of such persons? Do we admire them, or love them? Does not the suspicion cross our minds, that a false peace has come upon them as a curse; that to be thus satisfied and complacent is not human, is ominous? With whom have we most sympathy? who is felt instinctively to be our brother? Is it the man who is self-sufficing and serene; or the

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man who knows what darkness and doubt and inward restlessness are? Oh, it is far better not to have found rest at all, than to have drunk the opiate of vanity! What does God say, by the mouth of the old prophet, to him in these days, who is ill at ease because he has not found his true satisfaction, and to him who is satisfied and at ease in himself? "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God. Behold all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of Mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow."

There is an awakening voice, too, in those words, "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, ...who are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph." No man has a right, we feel, to be at peace in himself, who has no hope for other men, who is not cooperating with their heavenly Benefactor. The comfortable people in a civilized land might implore rest and peace for their brethren surely, if not for themselves, as

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earnestly as those savages who met the African traveller continually with the touching salutation, "Great chief, give us rest." Every one should lend his help to turn into the accents of hopeful prayer that ancient "doleful song, chanted from an illused race of men that clean the soil, sow the seed, and reap the harvest with enduring toil." Every one should struggle against the general lethargy that cheats the soul of its true rest, which kills instead of reviving it.

There may be more of such lethargy now than at some other times; but there is as much need as ever of the true reviving rest, which refreshes and invigorates. We are still taught to ask, and not allowed to be happy without an answer to the question, on what standing-ground we may plant our foot firmly, to what rock we may fasten our anchor. We may have striven, or be striving, to attach outward things, our possessions or pursuits or enjoyments, to ourselves; but where is *our own* stability? how are we to save *ourselves* from being drifted hither and thither? We must attach ourselves to something that cannot be shaken, and not think about making ourselves lords and centres.

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We are like the shell-fish made to cling to the rocks, and we must find our rock to cling to.

God promises, as we have seen, to be Himself our Rock, our Stay, our Rest. He shows us His own Son, and offers Him to our trust and our love. He presents to us a human heart to lean upon; He holds out a human hand to help us. He tells us moreover that all the changes of the creation, all the vicissitudes of our own history, are His ministers. He reveals to us the Eternal governing the temporal, permanence at the heart of variety. He holds us firm amidst the whirl of things: He teaches us to discover harmony in a chaos. So He protects us against being overpowered by outward things, and being disquieted by their terrors.

God the Father of our spirits, God the Lord of the Universe, offers, let me repeat, *Himself* as our Rest. We must understand this well, because, if we only think that God is able by some influence to make us happy and at ease, we shall not claim the fulness of His wonderful promise. We shrink perhaps from the awful truth, that we have fellowship with the Eternal God. But this is His assurance to us, of which the Incarnate Son is the pledge and seal. And

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it was a true human soul, whose desires God Himself had stirred up, which cried out, "Like as the hart desireth the waterbrooks, so longeth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul is athirst for God, yea even for the Living God; when shall I come to appear before the presence of God?" If we knew the meaning of every restless movement in our own hearts, of the hunger and thirst which make us uneasy in ourselves and disturbing to others, all would be interpreted into the voice, 'thy soul is athirst for God, yea even for the Living God.' Just as every word that has spoken peace to our hearts, every breath of refreshment which has passed over them and revived them, has come from the Living God, and has been some token of His Righteousness, of His Faithfulness, of His Love. We are seeking for God; and when we find Him we are satisfied.

We must not forget that God encourages us to seek for rest and satisfaction, by speaking of His own rest and satisfaction. The Father rested and rests in the perfectness of Creation; He rests and is satisfied in His well-beloved Son. He bids us, who are made in His image, follow after His rest. This is a great mystery;

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but there is light and comfort in even a glimpse of it. To meet God, in the full enjoyment of peace and security and happiness, in Jesus Christ Whom God raised from the dead, is the privilege which God has bestowed upon us. God lays down His Rest as the support of ours.

But must we not conclude that such spiritual privileges are only within the reach of a few, of saints who receive visits from Angels on sick-beds, of those who can sit over edifying books, and manage to forget the world? Can we suppose that the busy laborious man, rich or poor, the mother with the cares of a large family, those whose energies are so taxed by necessary occupations that they have no leisure to read good books, have any share in that quiet rest in God, that approach to Him in Jesus Christ, which seems as if it might be so heavenly and so comforting? Why, brethren, to whom is *rest* offered, but to those who toil? We can imagine indeed that the day's work may so occupy and exhaust both body and mind, that the man is fit for nothing at the end of it, but to throw himself on his bed and go to sleep. But then there is the Sabbath-Day, recurring with its blessed interval, on purpose

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that the spirit may have a quiet thoughtful time, and may take notice of God Who is so near, and be refreshed by the light of His countenance. Let us agree together by all means to repudiate all fancy religion, all high-flying mystical refinements. Rather believe, I entreat you, that all we say and all that the men of the Bible say about the refreshment to be found in God is a fiction and a mockery, than that God has provided in religion a luxury for the idle, and leaves the hard-working to fight their own way, and to draw upon their own resources, without aid from Him, without communication with Him. If the Sunday rest is most necessary and most refreshing to those who have worked hard all the week, then also the rest of knowing God and trusting in God is most necessary and most refreshing to those who have the roughest work to carry through, who have the most doubtful battles to fight.

Let no one impute, at any rate, to the Scriptures, either the old or the new, that theory of a religion which is to be the ornament or luxury of a select class. Moses was not an idle man, nor was David. The prophets did not withdraw themselves from secular and

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political concerns. Isaiah was speaking to citizens and cultivators when he said of God, "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd, He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, He shall gently lead those that are with young." He wished to correct the despondency and faithlessness, the cowardice and idleness, of ordinary men, when he bade the people look up to the stars, and remember who called them all by their names, so that not one of them failed; and went on with this noble expostulation, "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not neither is weary. There is no searching of His understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint."

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"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength:"—that is the Old Testament expression of the truth to which I am testifying to-night. God spake it by the mouth of a prophet. Afterwards He spake by a Son to men; and that Son said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will refresh you." We keep our Sabbath on the Resurrection Day of the Son of God, that we may remember Who gives us rest, and may come to Him to be refreshed. Let not the refreshing and reviving power of Christ be dropped from our thoughts concerning Him. The Communion of His Body and Blood promises to strengthen and refresh our souls. Let every Sunday speak to us of that perfect support and renewal which we may find in Jesus Christ our Lord, and which His Spirit will infuse into our spirits. Let every hour of depression and faintness, especially of that depression which cannot be cured by lying down upon our beds, lead our tired souls to Him Who has food for all our hunger, and medicine for every disease. Let the records of our past experience be dear and instructive to us, telling us as they do of vanity and vexation, but telling us also of the sweet-

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ness of casting all our care upon God, because He cares for us.

I believe I might confidently appeal to all who make Sunday a day of worship as well as of bodily rest, whether they have not actually found strength and refreshment for the week's labours in meeting God and their brethren at Church. If indeed our Church Services are a burden which we are compelled to bear, they ought not to be allowed to encroach on the Day sacred to Rest. They are proper to the Sabbath-Day, if they are legitimate and effective means of helping our souls into communion with God and of so procuring them rest and refreshment. Thus our Sabbath-day worship is a most precious witness concerning the true nature of worship. The idea of the Sabbath-day should guard us against allowing our services to be burdensome to any, and should testify to us that we have not learnt the secret of worship unless it refreshes us and enables us to do our appointed work more cheerfully.

This actual living testimony of our Sabbath-Day seems to me more important than I can say. God grant that it may make itself audible to our hearts! What need is there of contro-

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versies about the authority for Sunday observance, when we can ask the Day itself, and hear it explain its own nature? It says that God would make all His creatures happy through work and rest,—work done for Him, and rest found in Him. It proclaims that God cares for the peasant as for the prince, for the maid-servant as for her mistress. It invites all to meet on common ground, to adore the Common Lord and Saviour.

Shall we not strive to keep such a Sabbath, to be true to its principles?

If we do, we shall think a Sunday ill-spent in that dissipation which exhausts the energies instead of repairing them. Knowing how vanity wearies the souls of men and of women, we shall watch against the intrusion of such idle occupations as promote vanity upon the peace and calm of our English Sunday. We shall test the claims of any novelty which offers itself as 'recreation,' and consider whether it does really tend to *re-create* us, that is, to make us more able to do our work.

But we shall also be on our guard against austerities and restrictions of which the natural effect is to make Sunday a gloomy and

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burdensome day, oppressive to the spirit instead of cheerful and refreshing. In the interest of the Sabbath-day, the day of refreshment, we shall be willing to incur many dangers rather than to allow a dark veil to be drawn over God and the things of God, so as to hide Him from the eyes of His children, and make Him seem other than He is, especially to the poor and the young. Observe, brethren, *in the interest of the Sabbath-day itself*, we shall maintain this vigilance. We ought not to say '*although* it is Sunday' we will allow this or that which is cheerful and refreshing, but '*because* it is Sunday,'—because a Sabbath-day has been given to men to make their burdens light, and not to be itself an additional burden. To judge from our Saviour's example, we ought to be more jealous of this kind of encroachment upon the Sabbath principle, the encroachment of arbitrary restrictions, than of common and careless neglect.

Then again, if we wish to be true to our Sabbath, we must exert ourselves to undo the heavy burden and break every yoke. Masters and mistresses have no right to add the toil of a Sunday to a good week's work. Every

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human being has a right to a fair share of rest; and those ought to be most cared for by others who are least able to protect themselves. The true principle of the Sabbath-day testifies loudly against all drudgery and oppression; so that no one is an inward keeper of the Sabbath, who does not contend to the utmost of his opportunities against all grinding of the poor, and therefore against all the habits and caprices, the covetousness or the luxury, which make the lot of the labouring man harder than God has made it.

Lastly, we shall respect the ordinance of Public Worship, and do what in us lies that it may be a genuine refreshment both to ourselves and others. This idea of public worship should be kept before our minds,—that it is an appropriate employment for the common Day of Rest. If all rest together, why should not all worship together? If God has given us a Sabbath as a sign that He sanctifies the nation, ought we not unitedly to acknowledge Him as the ground of our unity and the giver of our blessings? Those who separate themselves from public worship may be charged with separating themselves from the multitude, and

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breaking the social tie. We are not to make private bargains with God; we are to accept the common redemption, and be saved through sonship as brethren.

After all, our Sabbaths here must be very poorly kept. Some weariness of the body or the spirit will make us often sigh in the hours of our greatest enjoyment. One of the chief benefits which we receive from our Sundays is that they remind us of the more perfect Rest which is future. That is in store for those who have got rid of their unbelief and have learnt to trust absolutely in God. In proportion to our faith we have a foretaste of it here. Let us labour therefore to enter into that Rest.

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THE BIBLE,

A REVELATION OF THE BEGINNING AND END OF WORSHIP.

BY

FREDERICK DENISON MAURICE, M.A.

CHAPLAIN OF LINCOLN'S INN.

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THE BIBLE,

A REVELATION OF THE BEGINNING AND END OF WORSHIP.

EXODUS XXV. 22.

And there will I meet with Thee.

I HAVE taken a very short text, a few words out of a verse. I believe those few words tell us what the whole Bible is about. I believe they tell us what the Bible has done for England, and what it may yet do. I believe they tell us what is the beginning and the end of worship.

The words were addressed to the children of Israel. They had been slaves in the land of Egypt. They had been set free. They were travelling through a desert. Moses who was leading them had told them from the first that he had not delivered them. The God of

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their fathers had delivered them. He had told them that he was not really their leader. The Lord God was their leader. He was going before them and behind them. He was with them at every moment. He was thinking of them and providing for them. They might trust Him at all times. It was sin and misery to distrust Him.

It was hard for the children of Israel to believe this. It was not hard to believe that there were Gods. It was natural to do that. The Egyptians who had been their masters had done that. But the gods whom the Egyptians worshipped could be seen; some of them could be handled. They worshipped things in heaven; things on earth, things in the water under the earth. But to worship a God whom they could not see, of whom they saw no similitude, this was very hard for masters or for slaves. It was not hard to believe that there were powers above them who wanted something of them. It was not hard to guess that their gods wanted the same things that they wanted or wished for. But to believe in a God who was caring for their wants; looking after them; guiding them every moment; direct-

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ing their marches; feeding them when they hungered, giving them water to drink; this was hard. It was not hard to suppose they were under some cruel Tyrant. It was very hard to suppose they were under a Deliverer.

Yes! this was hard for them; it is hard for you and me. They murmured when drought and famine were upon them; they said, Can God furnish a table here in the wilderness? We should have done the same. But God, so the book tells us, was leading them by drought and famine to trust Him. By these things He was teaching them, that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. That was one lesson. Another was, that they were under a law—a law which man did not make, but which God made; a law which no man and no nation could set aside; a law which must be obeyed; which it was ruin and death not to obey. Amidst thunders and lightnings the law was proclaimed. It began with saying, that the Lord God, He who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, was their God. They must have none other gods but Him. It went on to say, that they

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should not make graven images or suppose God to be in the likeness of anything in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth. These commands brought to light the disposition that was in the hearts of the Israelites, the disposition that is in the hearts of all men. Very soon those who had stood beneath the burning mountain, who had seen the lightnings and heard the thunders, were bowing down to a calf. These men were worshipping a beast. The terrors their eyes had seen did not keep them from this transgression. What could keep them from it? What could hold them to the worship of the unseen God the Deliverer?

We are told that God made a *Covenant* with the children of Israel. What does a Covenant mean? It does not mean that the holy and living and true God made a bargain with His creatures, that they should do certain things for Him, and that He would do certain things for them. That would have been a very profane thought to entertain about Him. But it means that He said to the Jews, I am your God and you are my people. Rest in me, submit to me, and I will keep you from those

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evils to which you are so prone. I will not let you go on in your foolish and false ways; I will lead you into the right and true way. I will not let you worship calves; I will teach you to worship Me. I will not let you become miserable earth-worms; I will raise you to be men. I will not let you sink into slavery; I will keep you free. If you forget this Covenant of mine—if you think you can keep yourselves from idols or from any evil practice which is contrary to my will—you will find yourselves deceived. The temptation will be too strong for you. You will do just as you have done; just as your fathers have done. But if you remember my Covenant; if you remember that it is I who am upholding you; I who am your Teacher and Ruler; I who know the secrets of your hearts; I who can set you right when you go wrong; if you remember this, then you will find that I am stronger than all your evil propensities and evil thoughts which are so strong; I can and will make you righteous and holy as I am. You see the Covenant of God was that He would enable His people to keep those Commandments which no terrors could force them to keep. The terrors

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could not make them love His Commandments. He could. That it might be seen how real this covenant was—that no covenant between man and man was so real—it was written, we are told, on Tables of Stone. These Moses held in his hand when he came down from the Mount, where he had been alone with God. When he saw the people sacrificing to a calf, he threw down these tables and broke them, for he thought they had broken their faith with God. That was true. But it was not true that God had broken His faith with them. They were His people still. He was still watching over them, correcting them, protecting them. He renewed His covenant. It was written again on Tables. He was loving them, and showing them that they could not have any blessing or peace until they loved Him.

You see what the Bible is teaching us so far. It is teaching us that the Israelites were all wrong when they followed their own thoughts about God. The worship which they wanted was a bad, degrading, slavish worship. It was the worship of that which was below themselves. It was the worship of one of those creatures which man was to rule over. Those who wor-

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shipped such things, whether they were Egyptians or Israelites, could not be free men. They must crouch and grovel. They must be at the mercy of some tyrant.

The Bible is teaching us next that God Himself is the Author of worship. He desires that His creatures should know Him. He desires fellowship with them. He asks them not to fly from Him, but to turn to Him. He makes Himself known to them in the character of a Saviour. He will not suffer them to see Him in any other. This is the Bible doctrine. And now we shall understand better the words of the text.

Moses was desired to prepare a Tabernacle according to a pattern which had been shown him in the Mount. That Tabernacle was to be set up in the midst of the congregation of the people. That Tabernacle was to go with them through the wilderness. That Tabernacle was to be taken with them into the land which had been promised. That Tabernacle was to be a sign in the wilderness, to be a sign when they came to a settled habitation, that the Lord God—the God of whom they had seen no similitude, who had said, I am He that brought

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you out of the house of bondage—was dwelling among them. That was to be a sign that He was never forgetting them. That would say to them, Do not forget Me. That Tabernacle was to contain the Tables of the Covenant, the witnesses for generation to generation that God was Himself guiding, educating, reproving His people. In that Tabernacle there was to be a Mercy Seat, and Cherubim overshadowing the Mercy Seat. *There*, said the Lord by the mouth of Moses, *There will I meet with Thee.*

I have explained to you the occasion on which those words were spoken, and in doing so, it has been necessary that I should go over the story which is contained in the book of Exodus. The book of Leviticus has also reference to this Tabernacle and to this Mercy Seat. It is declaring how God appointed an order of men to serve in the Tabernacle; how He appointed sacrifices which should be offered in it; how He decreed, when and how and for what purpose those sacrifices should be brought. There had been priests in every nation; there had been sacrifices in every nation. Everywhere men felt that they had

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rebelled against some divine Being with whom they ought to be at peace; everywhere they looked out for some man who could help to make peace between them and their gods; everywhere they felt they ought to give up some things which pleased them to their gods. In the book of Leviticus we read how God Himself is choosing the way for His people to come to Him; how He is removing the obstacles which kept them from coming to Him; how He is ordaining the men, by whom He will speak to them and the things which they shall give up. It is not they that want to meet Him. It is He that is desiring to meet them.

In the book of Deuteronomy, the fifth of these books of Moses, he is reminding the Israelites, with whom he was soon to part, how wonderful it was that God should have come so nigh to them, and that they should be brought so close to Him. It seemed too strange and awful to be true. And yet they had the clearest proofs that it was true. They had this proof above all others: when they thought God was afar from them, when they ceased to trust Him, they became a poor miserable heartless people.

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And he tells them that as it had been in the past, so it would be hereafter. If they held fast by their Deliverer, if they trusted Him and worshipped Him, they would be a wise and understanding people in the sight of the nations, they would continually be growing more wise and strong and brave and free. If they forgot Him and became worshippers of any thing or person besides Him, they would become the most degraded of all nations, outcasts of men, scorned by their neighbours, scorned by themselves.

The books of the Old Testament which follow this, make the sense of its words clear to us. The book of Joshua tells how they conquered the land of Canaan, though it had a number of walled cities and huge men in it; because the cup of the iniquities of the land was full, because it was given up to the worship of unclean gods, and its inhabitants become plagues of the earth, and of each other; because the Israelites, poor and weak in themselves, went forth in the Name of the righteous and mighty God, and were acting as His ministers. The book of Judges tells us how these same Israelites, when they had become conquerors and possessors of

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the land, began to worship idols like the people about them; how this people got the victory over them; how the living God met with them and stirred them up in their bondage to cry to Him; how He raised up deliverers for them who smote their enemies. The books of Samuel and of Kings and of Chronicles carry on the same history through the time when they were living under kings, the son reigning after the father. When these kings remember that the righteous God is with them, when they trust Him, when they go forth to battle in His Name, when they believe they are reigning as His servants and by His covenant, then they are strong to fight their enemies, then they are blessings to their subjects. When they forget the righteous God, the Deliverer, when they bow to the visible gods, to the cruel, hard-hearted gods, of the nations round about, then the strength of them and of their people withers; they become superstitious and divided and wicked. If they rise up and turn to the true God and sweep away these abominations, life and peace return to the land. But when they have sunk down into the depths of idolatry, and have become utterly heartless, the force of a

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mighty empire comes upon them; they are carried into captivity. They would not serve the Lord God in their own land; they must learn what it is to be under the dominion of other lords in a land that is not theirs.

All the time that this history was going on, the Mercy Seat and the Cherubim that covered it were still witnessing to the children of Israel that God was in the midst of them. In Solomon's days they were taken into a glorious house, which the king dedicated to God, and where the priests offered the sacrifices every morning and evening. So the words, "*There will I meet with thee,*" stood from generation to generation. You will read in the book of Psalms, what these words were to shepherds who were watching their flocks on the hill-side, to kings who were going out to battle, to sick men, to men scoffed at and deserted by their friends, to men crushed by a sense of their sins, to men struggling with the fear of death, to men who were living far away from their own land and were surrounded by worshippers of idols. In all time of their tribulation, in all time of their wealth, they find that God is speaking to them, that He is remembering them when they

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have forgotten Him, that He is recalling them from their wanderings, that He is turning them to Himself. That which seemed to be separating them from Him and to be taking away all their trust and hope, is made the means of uniting them to Him and of restoring them to their trust and hope. God is the beginning of their worship; He awakens them to it; He makes them feel the need they have of seeking Him; He quickens them to seek Him; He causes that they should find Him. God is the end of their worship. They may ask Him for deliverance from sicknesses, or from cruel persecutors, or from the burdens of conscience, or from the pains of bodily death, or from the second death of the soul. But after all, it is the Deliverer Himself they want. He is the strength of their life and their portion for ever. They cannot be satisfied till they wake up after His likeness.

You will see as you read these Psalms—you will see far more clearly when you use them in private or public worship—how much the writers of them delighted to come to the actual Mercy Seat overshadowed by the Cherubim, how fully they believed that God would meet, did meet,

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His creatures there, and how many lessons they learnt at that place. You will find how they, and still more how the prophets, mourned over the Temple when it was desolate and lying waste; how they felt that the glory of the land had then departed; how they suffered till it was built again; how they rejoiced when they saw it appearing once more as a pledge that God had turned away the captivity of His people.

But you will see also that what God had taught them of Himself there, enabled them to believe that He would meet them everywhere. You will see that it led them to ask, "What does this Tabernacle, this Mercy Seat mean? How is it that God can indeed meet with us? What is it that binds us to Him? Must it not be some Person? Must there not be some Priest higher than any of the priests in this Tabernacle, who stands between us and Him, who joins us to Him? What sacrifice can that Priest have to offer? Where is He? Will He ever appear to us? If He ever does, may we not meet God more than we have ever met Him yet? If He does, may not all men meet God in Him?"

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Brethren! the New Testament like the Old is written to explain the words "there will I meet with thee." The New Testament explains them as the Old Testament could not. For the New Testament declares that He whose appearance the Jewish worshippers longed for has appeared. The New Testament tells us that God created men in His Son; that God met men of old in His Son, whether they sought Him in the Tabernacle or in their lonely chambers, or on the hill-side; whether they cried to Him under the pressure of poverty or sickness, or slavery, or the desertion of friends, or the burden of sin, or the pain of death, or the dread of the second death. The New Testament says, that this Son has come into our world, has been born of a woman, has been in all points tempted like as we are. The New Testament tells us that in Him God has met men, and has reconciled them unto Himself. The New Testament says, that God has given Him up for us all, and that He has offered the perfect sacrifice of Himself, the only sacrifice in which God can delight. The New Testament tells us that God has raised Him from the dead, and has exalted Him to His own right hand, and that He is our High Priest and Mediator for ever.

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This Atonement or Reconciliation of God with men is the subject of the Gospel which the Apostles preached to all the nations. They declared that it was accomplished; that God had made peace with men. They besought men not to continue at variance with Him. But that was not all their message. Those who heard it might still say: Supposing it is so—supposing God has this good-will towards us which you speak of—how can we overcome our evil will to Him? Suppose He has turned to us, what power is there in us to turn to Him? What is the good of talking to us about repentance, if we are not able to repent; if we are so fixed and rooted in habits of evil that we cannot by any effort come out of them? What is the good of bidding us believe, when belief is the hardest thing of all to us? I say, brethren, they might have said this to the Apostles; no doubt they did say it. And this was the answer! This Jesus Christ has not only come into the world to shew us the Father of our spirits—to make us see how true and righteous and loving He is; this Jesus has not only come perfectly to fulfil His Father's will; to offer a perfect sacrifice to God; perfectly to overcome Death

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and Hell. He has come to baptize us with the Spirit. He has come to bestow upon us the Comforter in whom He and the Father are united. He has come that God may write His laws in our hearts and in our minds. He has come that God may verily dwell with us, and we with Him; that we may live as His children; that His light may shine through us upon the world.

This was the message the Apostles brought with them. And they said, This Spirit of the Father and the Son is bestowed not upon one here and upon one there. He comes to bind men together. He comes to establish a Family of God on earth which shall be one with His Family in Heaven. He comes that all nations and kindreds and people and tongues may know that it is their privilege to worship the same Father in the same well-beloved Son by the same Spirit. He comes to break down the barriers of caste and class and opinion and self-interest that have separated man from man. He comes to deliver men from vile superstitions; that they may not seek in dark hours to wizards that peep and mutter, but to the living God. He comes to lead us into all truth, that the

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truth may make us free; and that we may seek no freedom but that which truth gives. He comes that we may worship God in spirit and truth, because the Father seeketh such to worship Him.

Such lessons as these you will find in the Gospels and the Epistles of the New Testament. They take up all the words and lessons of the Old Testament, all that is written about the Cherubim and the Mercy Seat; they say, 'all this is now, not for Israelites, but for men—for men in the farthest ends of the earth.' It is true that God is their King and Deliverer; that He is providing for their wants; that they are under His law; that they are included in His Covenant. It is true that He is claiming them as His sons and daughters, and that they may look up to Him and say 'our Father.' And if you turn to the last book in the Bible, that book which we call the Revelation, that which is the summary of all the revelations that have gone before, you will see how one part of the Scriptures answers to another. You will find the book of Genesis appearing again there; a nobler tree of life than that we heard of in the garden of Eden, which is not guarded by

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angels—but the fruit of which all are invited to taste. You will find the book of Exodus again there, you will hear of the Tabernacle of God being with men, and of His dwelling with them and being their God. You will find some of the latest words in the book, those which have gone through the whole of it, 'WORSHIP GOD.'

You will see that worship does not mean there more than anywhere else that we are by hard efforts to climb up to God. It means that He is meeting us and drawing us to Himself, and that He has sent His Spirit into the world and established His Church in the world for the very purpose of bringing all to Him. For thus it is written: "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him that is athirst say, Come; and whosoever will, let him come and take of the Water of Life freely."

Yes, Brethren! that is the message which the Bible has brought to men in the past ages; that is the message which it brings to them now. Sometimes when a poor and ignorant man opens it at home or hears it read in Church, he says to himself, 'How am I to understand that? What a large book it is! What a number of people it speaks of, about whom I know very

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little, and shall never have time to learn much! Then what disputes there are about the sense of it. If I get one to tell me the meaning of a passage in it, perhaps the next I meet will contradict him. With which part of it am I to begin? Where am I to end?' What I answer to that poor man is, The Bible begins with the living God and ends with the living God. The Bible is to tell thee that God knows thee, cares for thee, seeks after thee. The Bible is to tell thee that thou mayest seek God, come to God, know God. Because the Bible has told poor men this, therefore they have clung to it; therefore its words have entered into their hearts; therefore its words have brought light to their hearts. If the Bible had spoken of itself, it would have done no man any good. It speaks not of dead letters, but of a living Person; it speaks of what He is and of what He does; there is its strength, there is its charm. And so it gets a thousand interpreters for itself. It is written about families. Every one who tries to be faithful in his family, as son, husband, mother, daughter, wife, sister, gets an interpretation of the Bible. It is written about nations. Every man who tries to be a good citizen, a good soldier, a good trades-

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man, a good mechanic, gets an interpretation of the Bible. And in its turn the Bible interprets all that goes on in the family and the nation, all the greatest events and the commonest events. Poverty and the Bible interpret each other. Sickness and the Bible interpret each other. Sin and the Bible interpret each other. Death and the Bible interpret each other. For Christ bore our poverty, our sickness, our death, our sins. Christ has been made a curse that He might make all curses into blessings for us.

Learned men cannot dispense with these interpreters of the Bible more than other men. If they think to understand it without such helps, they blunder and contradict each other. For it is a book of Life. Learning about words and letters may be a great help to life, but it can never set aside God's discipline of life; it can never take the place of that. Therefore, I say, ask the Bible to tell you about the Beginning and the End of Worship, and it will tell you one and all; whatever portions of it you may read; though you may only be able to snatch up a few texts of it here and there. For in very deed you are not asking the Bible to teach you this, you are

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asking the Everlasting God. The Bible contains this promise, *They shall be all taught of God.* If this promise is true, if it will last though Heaven and Earth pass away, why should the most ignorant and foolish doubt that he may be cured of his ignorance and folly? Is not God wise enough to do that? If it is His Will to save us, as the Bible says it is, what have we to desire but that His Will may be done? Again it is written in the Bible, *They shall all know Me from the least to the greatest.* Do you think there is any better thing for us than to know God? Do you think that He cannot make all know Him? Be sure it is we that are not minded to keep Him in our knowledge. Be sure it is we that are saying as the Israelites said of old, Let the Holy One cease from before us.

Dear Brethren! In this time of Lent when we are invited to confess our sins, let us confess this sin above all others—that we have not cared to meet God; and therefore that we have not believed His promise, I will meet with you. Let us confess that we have thought Him an Enemy and not a Deliverer and a Father, and that therefore we have fled from

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Him. Oh, let us ask Him now to give us a better mind! Let us ask Him to make us understand the signs and witnesses which He has given to us and to our forefathers that He is verily and indeed with us the people of England as He was with the Israelites of old. We have spoken to you of some of these witnesses. We have told you how God calls you by the voice of the Preacher to worship Him. We have told you how He has provided you with Common Prayers, that you may all say together, 'Thou art our Father. We are not worthy to be called Thy children.' We have told you how He assures us by Baptism that we are His children, how He gives us His Spirit that we may worship Him. We have told you how He feeds us with the Body and Blood of His Son, who is the perfect Sacrifice, that we may be able to offer ourselves as sacrifices to Him. We have told you how by His Sabbath-Day He bids us rest, as He rests in His well-beloved Son. And now I have claimed the Scriptures—those Scriptures which have been the strength and glory of our Country and Church as the final and divine witness; that He who was the author of the Jewish wor-

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ship, is the author of ours; that He who was the object of their worship, is the object of ours. We know the full Name which they were learning by degrees. The Father meets us as His children; the Son meets us as His brethren; the Spirit meets us when we are seeking to pray and know not what we should pray for. But the Father, the Son, and the Spirit is the one God blessed for ever, whom Moses and the Prophets worshipped. To that God we may commit ourselves, certain that His Name is Love, and that He desires us and all men to dwell in His Love now and for evermore.

THE END.

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